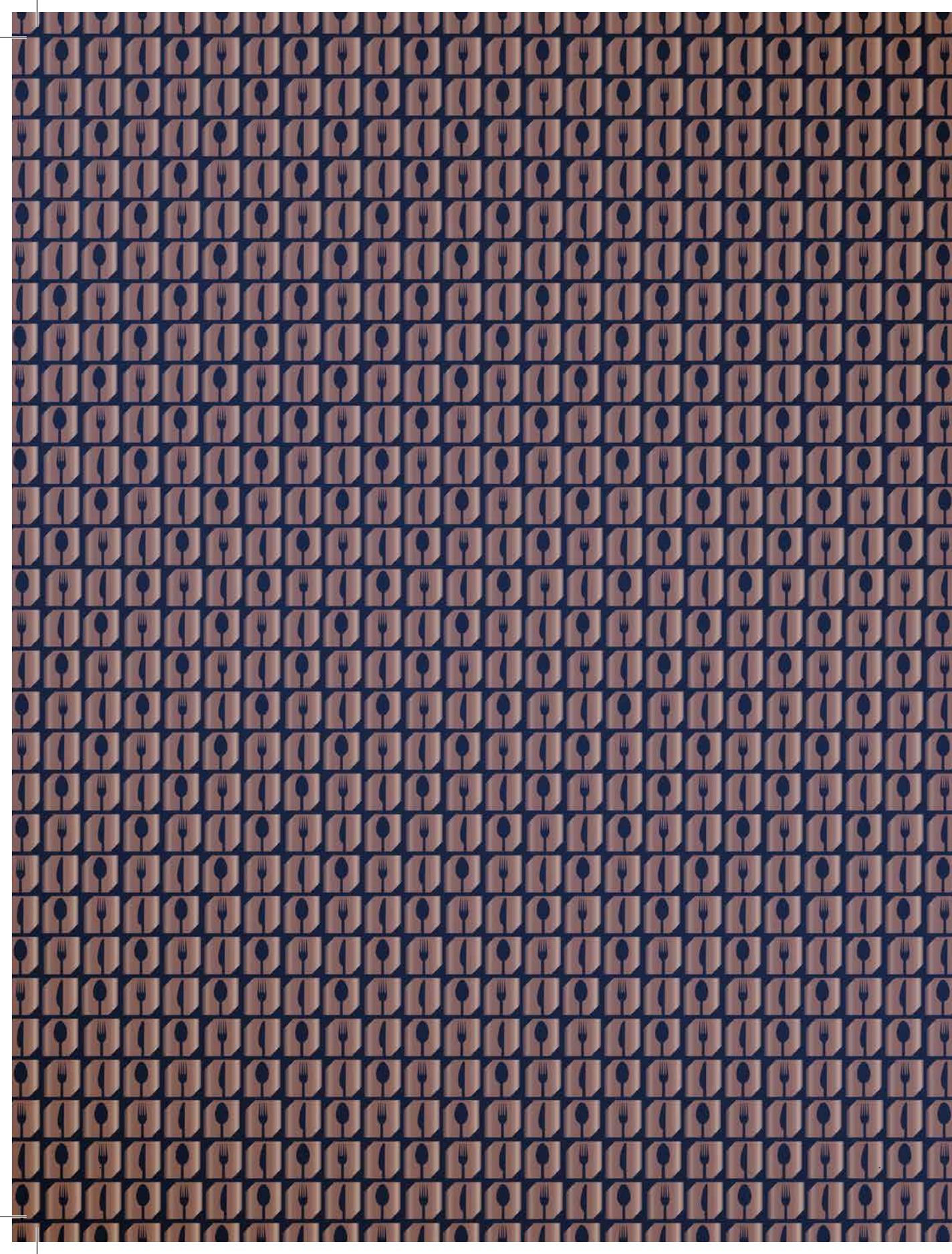


Restaurant
Success
Stories 2022



THE ESSENTIAL BOOK OF
CATERING INSPIRATIONS

VOLUME 2





FORWARD

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These superb
personal stories
are hugely
motivating for
the valuable and
vital work

.....

Our colourful food service industry is full of great stories, history and background. To bring together these wonderful stories from our fellow entrepreneurs we have created this inspirational book of success stories.

Not only does it inform us of the journeys we have made but also the delightful memories we are able to share. In reality, the majority of restaurants are losing money with a minimal number garnering success and being profitable. Our concept is to remind ourselves of what we have achieved and highlight success stories.

This year we are launching our Season 7 of the reality show series, the *Restaurant Star Show 2022* which will showcase a new “trendsetting” dish to sit alongside the traditional dishes we offer. We also want to remain inclusive and give visibility to those who aren’t always in the media spotlight. There are quiet heroes amongst us all! Our team has collated stories from all over the UK—from Stirling to Southend, from Bristol to Birmingham and from the villages to the big cities. Curry is everywhere and so are we!

The universal theme throughout each story has been one of hard work, dedication and sheer determination to make their businesses work—even during a pandemic! I hope you enjoy reading through the Success Stories of our industry and that it reminds you of all that we have achieved.

These superb personal stories are hugely motivating for the valuable and vital work we must continue to do in order to maintain the industry at its most successful—come what may!

Md Abdul Haque
Founder, Catering Circle

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BIGGER, LOUDER AND MORE UNITED VOICE

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Even if you're very successful right now, there's always more to learn and do.

.....

EDITORIAL

This book, published two years after the previous issue, serves not just as an opportunity to celebrate the successful restaurateurs and their businesses that continue to excite palates and fill stomachs in the face of so much adversity, but also as an opportunity to step into higher standards and an even more dynamic industry as we emerge from the ashes of the coronavirus.

You may say that the last two years have been nowhere near the best for Britain's beloved restaurant and takeaway industry. No denying the fact that, the coronavirus and three lockdowns have had a significant impact on our sector. What we can say now, however, is that there is every reason to be upbeat and optimistic about the future of restaurants, takeaways and other stakeholders of the catering sector. The easing of lockdown restrictions and the hope of the nation emerging from the pandemic will restore growth and confidence to hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs and their staff as well as millions more customers. At the same time, we are coming together with hundreds of these businesses for the Catering Circle's *5th Conference Dinner and Awards Ceremony* to celebrate our industry.

Today, as we move out of the pandemic into the post-Brexit era, skills shortages are becoming a major problem. Staffing issues, broken supply chains, pressure on profit margins and consumer demand for healthier options and finer food are just some of the challenges we will face in the coming year. But our industry survivors survived both the pandemic and Brexit. We asked a number of successful business owners, restaurateurs and chefs to share their views

and journeys to success. The theme of each story was hard work, dedication and determination to do business. Cooking is a dynamic profession—one that brings some of the greatest challenges as well as some of the greatest rewards, and equally dynamic is the restaurant business. Even if you're very successful right now, there's always more to learn and do. We hope this book can help guide future growth and help give importance to the lessons yet to be learned.

We are grateful for the support of our sponsors who supported us once again to put on this great event. We are enormously grateful to Channel 5 and to our Executive Members and Life Members for their unconditional support for this media platform. By working together, we will offer a bigger, louder and more united voice for the industry.

Albert Einstein said, "*In the midst of every crisis lies great opportunity.*" The pandemic slowed down our growth but we kept going, in fact, we did more than that. Our restaurants, takeaways and caterers stood with their neighbourhoods throughout the pandemic crisis and now is the time we must build a better and a more resilient industry with confidence and community spirit. Catering Circle will continue to bring learning and support to our friends and colleagues as we adapt to a *New Normal* and reinvent our business of tomorrow.

Towhid Shakeel

Marketing and Brand Director, Catering Circle



ABOUT US

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It now stands
as a symbol
of pride in
their history
and heritage.

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Curry has become an integral part of British culture yet the Curry Industry is currently facing an epidemic crisis. The £4.1 billion industry is being threatened with no future in sight unless issues are addressed.

Lack of chefs, staff shortages, tax rises, escalating business costs and the emergence of technology has meant the traditional curry house is slowly dying out. Successful enterprise has always been important to the hard working Bangladeshi community and the industry needs a boost and revival.

The media platform Catering Circle aims to address the issues within the industry and work with experts to find solutions.

Why is the curry industry so important?

British Bangladeshis have been at the forefront of contributing to British society by creating this vibrant industry. Curry has become one of Britain’s most loved cuisines. With many Bangladeshis arriving in Britain in the 1950s the curry house was the first stepping stone to building their futures and that of their children’s in Britain. It now stands as a symbol of pride in their history and heritage. Currently it boasts a huge industry generating over £4.1 billion for the economy. There are over 12,000 outlets in the UK. 18 tonnes of Chicken Tikka Masala are consumed every week and on average a British adult will



spend 1,260 a year on curry.

What can be done immediately?

- Improved Health and Safety Training
- Marketing, branding and PR including the importance of social media
- Demystifying technology
- Nurturing home grown talent with the ambition to establish Michelin Star chefs

What is happening to the catering industry?

- Businesses are suffering from a lack of well trained staff and the government's strict immigration policy
- The industry is being squeezed by the recession
- Growing technology means that customer preferences and demand have changed
- Online ordering and competition has revolutionised the industry. Traditional curry houses are struggling to keep up with demand

What are the long term plans?

- Making the industry "fit for purpose"
- Developing leadership within the industry
- Strengthening the relationship with the Banking sector so that businesses can expand
- Developing training manuals, promoting, supporting and encouraging training
- Continuing engagement with ministers and politicians
- Engaging with key stakeholders such as suppliers
- Raising profile for the catering industry
- Promoting catering industry in a way to attract the younger generation
- Becoming global leaders – sharing best practice with others in the catering industry



Restaurant and kitchen hygiene post pandemic the new norm

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And what
can you do
to make your
workplace
a more
attractive
career choice?
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The Asian restaurant industry is a very important and valued contributor to the national economy. It provides variety, offering a range of meal experiences and therefore important to national and local communities. The hospitality industry has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic, with many businesses struggling and some closing. The ones that have survived focused most of their efforts on take away and delivery, resilience became the order of the day! Now is the time to bounce back, and take the lessons that can be learnt from the pandemic and remodel the business to allow for growth and expansion.

A mini boom is expected in the UK moving forward from the pandemic, as people want to celebrate and eat out again, and so it is important to be ready by having all the hygiene and appropriate systems in place to deal with the increase in business.

It is becoming evident that we will have to live with the virus and that viruses are not going to go away, this means that hygiene in the kitchen and restaurant becomes even more important. Kitchens will not just need to be cleaned but sanitised thoroughly. All restaurant staff will be required to wash and sanitise their

hands more regularly. Many customers will expect hand sanitisers at reception, and hand sanitisers on every restaurant table, perhaps branded with the name and logo of the restaurant.

Good hygiene conscious restaurants will add a hand sanitiser wipe in the take away packaging, with the sterilised disposable wooden cutlery. More and more customers will expect this, hygiene and health safety are a key selling point, a good marketing tool and can be associated with a strong brand. Bowls of nuts and crisps on the bar for customers to help themselves will become obsolete.

Individual wrap packaging will become the norm. Some restaurants will find it advantageous to publish their hygiene policy alongside the scores on the doors. The policy may contain the restaurant's health policy on vaccinated staff for example some Asian countries require all waiters and food servers to be double vaccinated.

“ More and more customers will expect this, hygiene and health safety are a key selling point, a good marketing tool and can be associated with a strong brand.

Professor David Foskett MBE

Consultant
Chair of the International
Hospitality Council





EATING MADE EASY

THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

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A business
idea remains
an idea until
it meets
opportunities
for
distribution.
.....

With the handy help of technology, one phenomenon which has garnered much attention in the food arena recently is that of the ‘cloud’ or ‘virtual’ kitchen. The food source or kitchen location could be anywhere—from an established shop, to a humble family home. Particularly due to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, we’ve witnessed an unprecedented surge in opportunities for food businesses to germinate. A delicious dish, a dashing marketing campaign and a delivery driver - you’re good to go.

Such is the reality of the current catering climate, in that food brand market share is tied loosely to ownership of real estate in prime locations; what matters more is drive to deliver, literally. A business idea remains an idea until it meets opportunities for distribution - exactly what apps such as Just Eat, Uber Eats, Deliveroo etc. have provided to transform the landscape of the modern food economy. So many of us relied heavily on screens for information—screens whose domination by a budding food business alludes to a potentially sizeable market share. Businesses now utilise this to get people the food they want, when they want it, where they want it.

“

Upon reflection, it took a pandemic for us to edge faster towards the recipe of home entrepreneurship, but it's inevitable that the frequencies of food deliveries will grow exponentially in the years to come even after the pandemic is behind us.

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Let's turn back time. The idea of a 'restaurant' instils into our minds the notion of not just food on plates, but with it an arrangement of tables, chairs and background noise—framed as 'the dining experience.' But what happens when food can in fact be transported to customers, in the comfort of their own homes? While the social aspect of a meal would certainly justify the travel, the contrasting reasons surrounding convenience that come with delivered food are manifold: one can eat the same appetising food without formalities and seemingly (if the process is repeated) does not even need to know how to cook to survive. Of course, this simplified model excludes the potential health aspects of extremes of such a lifestyle. It's rather about a revolutionary paradigm shift towards ease of access.

Why did 'drive-through' facilities gain popularity? Ease. The thought of not even having to leave the car to dine! That's now levelled up and to dine the same, no travel is needed at all. It's easy to surmise why physical spaces would need to be designated to individual brands in the catering industry if people were to dine at the venue. But if food and food only is the main goal, then no such designated 'building' for the 'kitchen' is required.

Upon reflection, it took a pandemic for us to edge faster towards the recipe of home entrepreneurship, but it's inevitable that the frequencies of food deliveries will grow exponentially in the years to come even after the pandemic is behind us. While I'm not an advocate for specific brands here *per se*, the phrase 'Just Eat' really does summarise the culture us consumers are getting accustomed to. To put physics into play here, society will think before springing back, as food-lovers are adept in discovering the path of least resistance.



**Dr Zaki Rezwana
Anwar FRSA**



FINANCIAL PLANNING

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Elevate the traditional curry dish to harness modern ideas, orange sauces and coconut curries.

.....

SUCCESS IS A CONTINUING JOURNEY

From produce growers and product vendors to corporate chefs and industry bloggers, we're all in this together. Here are some ideas to spice up your road to continued success.

RE-IMAGINE TRADITIONAL DISHES

Put a few simple spins on traditional dishes, and turn out memorable catering entrées. Elevate the traditional curry dish to harness modern ideas, orange sauces and coconut curries.

SHOWCASE SENSATIONAL SIDES

Every entrée enjoys a better reception when it's served with a sensational side. From buffets to sit-down dinners, impress your guests with delicious, healthy sides. Premium produce is available year-round, so you always have nutritious options for culinary inspiration.

GET CREATIVE WITH DIETARY REQUESTS

Vegan is in the news. Capture a small aspect of it. Show you are

keeping up with the times. Keep your recipe box filled with ideas like gluten-free baby iceberg lettuce tacos, and innovative salads.

BUILD BEAUTIFUL DESSERTS

Show off the inventive side of your catering talent by building beautiful dessert destined to be snapped, posted and shared across social media. Craft visually stunning miniature desserts we enjoy at weddings, construct towers of frosted cream puffs, and assemble irresistible layers of chocolate truffle cake.

CATER TO YOUNG GUESTS

Young guests have buying power. They are discerning, full on social media and eat out more often than older guests. So do dishes that attract them. See the success with Turkish Restaurants. Copy and cross-pollinate some ideas into your menus.

PARTNER WITH PREMIUM SOURCES

Fresh fruits and vegetables are important ingredients in many of your signature catering recipes, so always source the best. Partner with growers and suppliers who consistently deliver field-fresh products. Establish dependable connections that ensure your access to premium produce year-round.

SPOTLIGHT LOCAL CHEFS AND INTRODUCE GUEST CHEFS

This is another working partnership that works for everyone involved. Consult with chefs in your area, even other cuisines and make them part of your catering evenings. The presence of a local chef adds another layer of professionalism to your catering business. It extends your outreach marketing too.

“

Show off the inventive side of your catering talent by building beautiful dessert destined to be snapped, posted and shared across social media.

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Dr Sanawar Choudhury
FCA

Chartered Accountant
and Registered Auditor



A woman in a light blue shirt stands at the front of a meeting room, holding a microphone and gesturing towards a whiteboard. Several people are seated in the foreground, with their backs to the camera. One man on the left has his hand on his head, and a woman in the center has her hand raised. The room is bright with large windows in the background.

Attracting, Engaging and Retaining Women in Hospitality

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I thought it would be interesting to take a look at the wellbeing perspective and inequalities when working in hospitality, particularly as a woman.

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In the previous publication, I wrote an article for Catering Circle highlighting the need for more women in our workforce and how employers could do more to attract and retain female workers within the Hospitality and Catering sector.

Two years on and this is still very much an issue and a topic I am passionate about. As well as being a chef and teacher, I am also a transformation coach focusing on guiding mid-life women through a journey of self-discovery and creating their dream life. With this in mind, I thought it would be interesting to take a look at the wellbeing perspective and inequalities when working in hospitality, particularly as a woman.

Working in the hospitality sector has had its fair share of bad press, from long, unsociable hours to abuse from male colleagues to injuries and bad pay. It's no wonder that recent studies and articles published in well known hospitality publications are emphasising how there has been a drop in applications to join the sector as well as many leaving the sector, largely due to low morale, poor pay and mental health issues.

Charity organisation, The Burnt Chef Project says on their website, "8 out of 10 hospitality professionals report having experienced at least one mental health issue during their career."

Google hospitality jobs right now, and there are countless vacancies and job sites. Made worse by the global pandemic, the gender pay gap and inequality became more glaringly obvious.

Tea Colaiani, Founder and Chair of WiHTL (Diversity in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure), said in their recent published report on the gender pay gap in Hospitality and Travel and Leisure, "It is more important than ever to tackle the gender pay gap in the wake of the pandemic, with companies across the sector stepping up to be seen as transparent with their reporting and taking meaningful action."

Tea goes on to say, "There is still much to do to ensure parity of gender representation and opportunities in the workplace, however every step forward can contribute to making a significant difference to pay equality and the broader diversity and inclusion agenda."

So what is being done and what changes are we seeing in terms of inclusion and inequality?

In the WiHTL report, there are inclusive policies being created, "Organisations across the sector realise that if they are to attract and retain female talent, they must implement targeted working family policies to further support women in their organisations to thrive. For example enhanced parental leave, adoption leave, loss of a child and menopause support."

This is vital for women who are young, entering the sector, who's lifestyle may change due to having a baby. If they feel that their employer is not going to take too well to the news of a pregnancy, then these women are likely to give up the career they've worked so hard for in return for a more work/life balance related job.

Likewise, women who have hit that mid-life point and potentially entered the peri-menopause/menopause stage in their life, will be most likely experiencing a host of symptoms from brain fog, sleepless nights, depression, tiredness, anxiety, lack of concentration and more.

Fellow co-author of The Government Report on menopause, Dr Andrea Davies, says, 'Menopause and work—it's a two-way street. Work is good for menopausal women. It contributes far more than just a salary, it can provide fulfilment, self-esteem, identity and social needs too. But working environments like those with lack of temperature control, cramped conditions, some uniforms and stress can also make menopause symptoms worse'.

It's crucial now, more than ever for employers to stand up and start being more vocal on the topics affecting their female workforce. By showing themselves as an equal opportunities, caring, understanding and inclusive employer, they are more likely to see a surge in female recruits who are loyal, dynamic, and nurturing, and this can only ever be a positive influence for all involved.

“Made worse by the global pandemic, the gender pay gap and inequality became more glaringly obvious.”

Hulya Erdal
Chef Educator and
Consultant



“ To stay in control of your reputation it is therefore important to claim your space on these platforms and put up as much useful information as you can. ”

find a spot in your restaurant where natural light floods in. (Pro tip: don't take pictures on the pass under heat lamps. The orange glow makes the pics look bad!)

To break up the parade of foodie pictures, include photos of the inside of your restaurant so your audience can get a feel for your dining atmosphere. Also, include photos of your staff; front-of-house, chefs, back-of-house staff, the whole team. Showcasing the friendly faces that make your restaurant more inviting.

Create a hashtag that is unique to your restaurant and use it consistently. Don't forget to add in geographical hashtags so you can draw in a local crowd.

Instagram is a two-way street when it comes to restaurant marketing; it's just as important to get your customers posting. Here are a few ways you can make this happen:

- Create instagrammable food; food that stands out in some way, whether it's through eye-catching colours, interesting textures or intriguing ingredients.
- Create an Instagram dessert menu as part of a limited time offer. If customers take a picture of their dessert and post it on Instagram with your restaurant hashtag, they get it for free.
- Find local foodie influencers on Instagram, individuals who have a large following on Instagram (and love good food) and as such have sway when it comes to recommendations they make. Invite them to your restaurant and ask them to post photos of their dining experience including your restaurant hashtag.
- Celebrate your restaurant's anniversary with

an Instagram giveaway. Put out a post asking people to like your account for the chance to win a free dinner for themselves and a friend. Include a deadline for your giveaway and make sure people stand a good chance of winning by handing out your prize to multiple winners.

- Get even more interactive with Instagram giveaways and nurture new customers into becoming loyal customers by running contests that offer free meals or dishes if, for example, customers post photos with their favourite waiter or waitress at your restaurant.

Remember to rEPOSt photos from your followers to show that you're grateful for their contribution.

2) Respond to reviews

Customers looking for somewhere new to eat will often turn to Google searching for reviews. Yelp, Facebook, Google, TripAdvisor reviews and the like will be listed in their search results. If you're not on these platforms, you could still be racking up reviews. To stay in control of your reputation it is therefore important to claim your space on these platforms and put up as much useful information as you can: photos, opening hours, your location, a mobile-friendly menu, price ranges and other facilities you have (WiFi, parking, outdoor seating *etc*).

Next, set up Google alerts, so whenever your restaurant name appears somewhere new online, you'll know about it. Good restaurant marketing isn't just about creating positive chatter about how great your restaurant is, it's about dealing with negative reviews in a way that can turn an unhappy customer into a happy one. Reply to negative reviews quickly, politely and in a

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In fact 92% of people trust family and friend recommendations, which is why Facebook's algorithm is now more heavily weighted to these recommendations over what businesses advertise.

”

friendly manner; apologise for a customer's bad experience and offer to redeem things with a free meal or discount.

3) Up your local ranking

Once again, Google reigns supreme when customers are looking for a restaurant near them. Local marketing for restaurants is made easy with Google Maps. If you can grab one of the top three spots in Google Map's results panel, you're certain to get more traffic to your website.

To be featured on Google Maps you need to set up a free Google My Business account and populate it with all the information a customer would find helpful: your opening hours, address, contact information and photos. Reviews will also show up, so make sure to follow tip #2. It also helps to keep your website updated and all of your restaurant details consistent across

various platforms.

4) Set up a loyalty programme

Keep your customers coming back for more with a simple loyalty programme. The lure of getting something free still works but today any decent loyalty programme needs to be digital.

Digital loyalty cards come with the added benefit of giving you data on what keeps your loyal customers coming back. Offer an incentive for new customers to sign up when they're at the till, such as a 10% discount off the bill they are about to pay. Finally, make sure you promote your loyalty card perks on your social media accounts, in your email campaigns and on your table tents

5) Get on board with Facebook check-ins

Facebook is still the biggest social media platform out there with arguably the most powerful reach. Facebook check-ins are an easy way to promote your restaurant by getting your customers to do much of the legwork.

A Facebook check-in is a type of post that highlights where someone is located and when. For businesses it acts as a personal endorsement. By encouraging your customers to check-in on Facebook when they visit your restaurant, you'll get instant exposure as Facebook check-in posts are on average seen by 150-200 Facebook friends of the customer who checks in.

No matter how finessed your restaurant PR is, there is nothing quite as powerful as being recommended by a friend or family member. In fact 92% of people trust family and friend recommendations, which is why Facebook's



algorithm is now more heavily weighted to these recommendations over what businesses advertise.

6) Get Smart: Link Your Social Media with Chatbots and Email

We find you can get incredible results by getting joined up: don't just rely on social media, enhance your presence with a paid-for ad targeting your local geography and fans of your type of food.

Then, link that post with a chatbot. A chatbot is a simple software that automatically carries out an on-line chat 'conversation' via text message to your potential customer. As part of that process, you can request the customer's email address, and incorporate them into your email marketing so you can start to build a long term relationship with them too.

Below are some ways we use Chatbots and Emails to get results for restaurants:

Viral Giveaway Campaign

One of the most effective campaigns is a viral giveaway. These get you a huge amount of attention from new potential customers using an attractive giveaway offer posted to Facebook.

You can then convert a significant amount of them into immediate paying customers using a clever Chatbot sequence. When the user comments on your giveaway offer, you can set it to open up Facebook Messenger and prompt them to pass on their email address (so you can add them to a mailing list) and you can offer them vouchers for their next purchase. This means they aren't just there for the free prize draw.

Birthday Bot Campaigns

Birthdays are a great opportunity for restaurants to get group bookings.

You can target potential customers who have a birthday coming up, reach them with a great offer to encourage a group booking, and convert them into paying customers. Set it up using Facebook ads and a smart Chatbot sequence that utilised Facebook messenger, and keep the campaign running in the background with fresh content each month.

“
an email marketing and messenger contacts database allowing you to reach them with great offers and new dishes directly.
”

VIP Clubs

Social media is great for reaching your fans – but you are always beholden to the dreaded algorithms – or worse, getting your account suspended.

We always advocate encouraging your customers to join a 'VIP club' for your restaurant – essentially an email list that allows you to communicate directly and provide loyal customers with great offers and regular announcements. Set up a great VIP programme that encourages people to join and builds an email marketing and messenger contacts database allowing you to reach them with great offers and new dishes directly.

We regularly get 40-60% open rates on emails and 80-90% open rates on messenger, so you can start turning social media 'interest' into bums on seats.



Richard Forshaw-Smith
Founder and Managing Partner
RFS Marketing



Six Easy Success Strategies for Restaurant Marketing & PR in a Post Covid World

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How exactly do you adapt to this new world and keep customers interested through Marketing and PR?
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During the pandemic, the hospitality industry has been forced to look for new ways to stay relevant; this is not necessarily bad news. With change come new opportunities.

What does this mean? It means that as a restaurant it is more important than ever to listen to your customers and be up to date with food trends that are important to your particular customers, and what they like and dislike about your restaurant. As long as you keep an eye on these two factors, you will be able to successfully adapt in a world where the customer holds all the clues.

So, how exactly do you adapt to this new world and keep customers interested through Marketing and PR?

You would be surprised at just how easy it is, and it doesn't take a big budget to do it!

Here are some cost-effective tips to ensure your marketing efforts are cutting through the competition post pandemic.

1. Your Market Positioning - It starts with the two C's, Customers and Competitors

Your positioning tells your customers (your market), what your restaurant stands for; who will be your target group of people; and how you will be unique from other restaurant brands.

This will help you write your messaging when it comes to Branding, Social and PR so that you can cut through the noise of your competitors and stand out.

In the crowded marketplace with more options than ever before, positioning will differentiate your brand from the competition. If everyone already has a perception of the top restaurant in town, don't try to fight against that. Don't try to take on your competitor's position. Find a different angle that you can own.

Positioning is so important, it influences the actions, mindset, design, service, and focus of your brand. This can only be done by understanding who your customers are, what their age group is, do they spend a lot, or are they budget buyers? In other words, what do the customers in your area want?

Next, what is your competitive landscape, which competitor is fulfilling their needs and what is missing? It is about looking at all the restaurants in the area and seeing which ones are popular and why, and are there any Indian cuisine alternatives? It isn't about what you would like to offer them, if they don't want it they won't buy.

If you are offering the same as all your competitors, unless you are the best in offering this category, it's time to start reviewing your positioning. But it starts with what the customers wants and what is already out there.

If there are four competitors all offering a traditional curry house experience in a market that has families, then offer something more young focused, with café culture that the younger members can visit with their friends. Make sure the customers exist or this won't translate into profit.

How do you know what to offer? Easy! What are you known for? What do your customers tell you are your good points? What are your unique aspects? Tripadvisor, surveys and face to face communication, as well as newspaper and magazine reviews will tell you how your customers

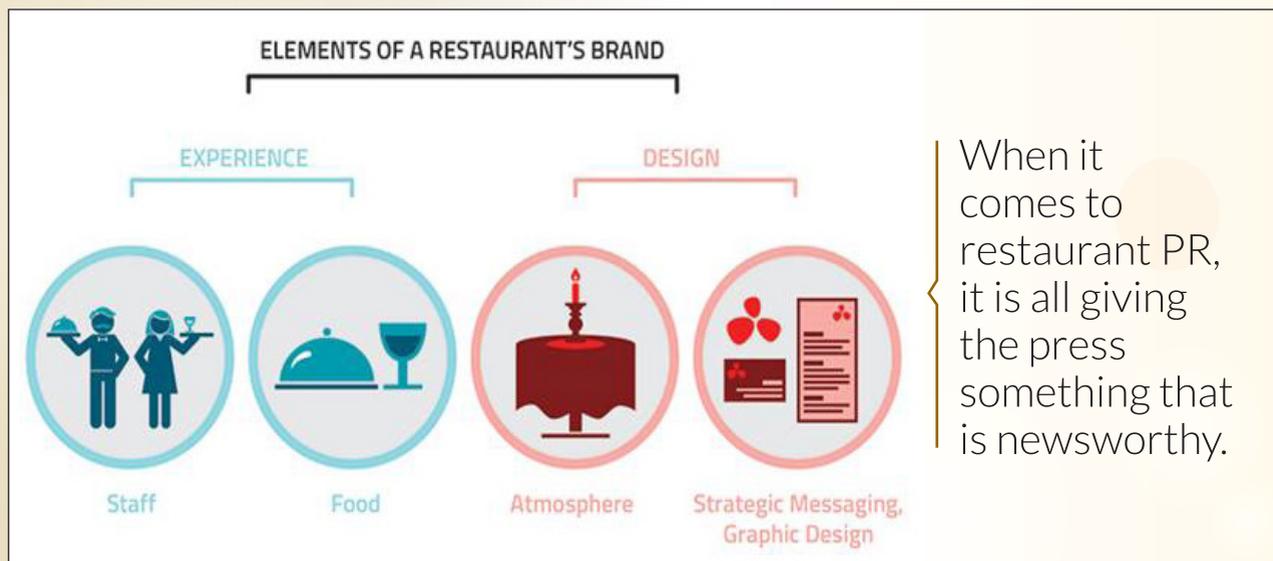
see you and what your strengths and weaknesses are.

Don't try to be everything for everyone, Indian restaurants are known to have hundreds of dishes on the menu, cut out those that don't sell, this will give you an idea of what works and what doesn't work, and the type of customers that love your restaurant.

There are several ways you can address your positioning:

- Positioning based on product characteristics. Do you pride yourself on offering only local produce, or a specialist cuisine that no one in the area offers? Do you have special dishes that others don't have?
- Positioning based on price - cheap and cheerful for the budget conscious.

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Don't try to be everything for everyone, Indian restaurants are known to have hundreds of dishes on the menu, cut out those that don't sell.
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When it comes to restaurant PR, it is all giving the press something that is newsworthy.

Positioning based on quality or luxury, fine-dining for the middle class.

- Positioning based on the competition. What is missing that your competitors do not offer but customers want to see? What can you offer, that no one else provides in the area?

By defining the right positioning you will be able to accomplish the following:

- Set your brand apart from the competition
- Be memorable
- Provide consistent messaging
- Increase advertising Return on Investment
- Create a framework for making better marketing decisions that translate into profit
- Unify the team's efforts

2. Brand Strategy

With positioning understood, branding needs to be consistent. Everything should help the customer identify your restaurant. Be consistent with the following;

- Brand logo and colours
- Brand font style (the lettering)
- Tone of voice (in other words, the way you speak to the customers in the restaurant as well as on social media)
- Your brand personality (what the restaurant is known for – is it fun, attractive or unique?)

- Brand messaging (what are the 2-3 sentences that you always use to describe your restaurant and the experience guests will get).

Branding covers both design as well as the experience and needs to be consistently the same across all aspects of your restaurant. This includes your interior, exterior, menu, website, social media channels, uniform, the way the customers feel when they enter and leave the restaurant, even the way your staff speak to the customers and the style of images you take for social media. A good example is Nando's, no matter which one you go to, you will have the same experience above and beyond the food.

Remember, your customer feedback will give you an idea of what your brand personality is, *ie* family friendly and warm hospitality, or classy and sophisticated *etc.*

3. PR builds Trust, Publicity and Profit

When it comes to restaurant PR, it is all giving the press something that is newsworthy. Here are some tips to do your own PR no matter what type of restaurant you have:

- A picture speaks a thousand words. A story doesn't get covered without professional images. For some reason, the photography budget is always cut but restaurants run the risk of giving an unprofessional image to customers.
- An investment of a few hundred pounds for images of your restaurant, signature dishes, chef and owner are not only for PR. Remember, your

images can be used on your menus, websites and social media, and they are vital for your website. These can last a few years and will increase your chances of getting press coverage and gives you a more professional image.

- Make sure you have actual news to share. Your story is what will get you into the publications, making them want to feature you. Doing this well will help you gain that all-important 'know, like and trust' factor.

So what makes a good story?

Journalists depend on the 'news angle' of your story. Is it new, topical, educational, different or quirky? They are also busy people, so when you email them, get to the point, sum up your reason for contacting them and what your story idea is or you will create a bad impression and they won't want to cover you in the future.

News examples include:

- Is it unusual or sensational? *Eg* hottest curry competition, largest onion bhaji in the country, *etc.* Did a celebrity visit your restaurant that you can share with photos?
- Does it affect the people that read the publication? A charity event or competition for the readers as part of a partnership with the press.
- Jump onto the latest news, is it flu season? Tell the press all the flu fighting benefits of a curry.

It must be timely, the story must be relevant to what readers care about in this exact moment.

- Celebrate awareness days. Is it National Vegetarian Week? Give the media some vegetarian recipes from your establishment for example.
- Offer stories about people. This can be a story of how your business survived COVID-19, or a celebration of how you have raised money for a local cause. Are you sending out some of your wait staff or cooks to help serve meals in a homeless shelter? That's news!
- Traditional food review—the lifestyle editor will never say no to a timely review or recipe linked to holiday.

Whatever you offer to the media, keep the following in mind;

- It must NOT be commercial or sound like an ad—that's what advertising is for!
- It must be timely, the story must be relevant to what readers care about at this exact moment.
- Your email/phone call must be short and to the point

Leverage away! Once you get featured in the press, it's important to capitalise on it and leverage your media coverage on social media and online.

4. Use Influencers and Reviewers to your Advantage

When it comes to advertising and public relations, there's nothing quite like a 5-star review posted on social media by a local influencer or reviewer.



“

One of the big reasons your guests dine with you is because of the experience you provide and how you make them feel, not just because of how delicious your food is...

”

So, where do you start? Search for a list of these essential influencers and local restaurant reviewers, who you can invite to your restaurant for a special “influencer night.”

Influencers love to be wined, dined, and recognised. This event gives you a chance to ensure they receive impeccable service, an exclusive interior look, and great food. In exchange, your restaurant will end up trending on social media, drawing in the highly coveted attention of potential customers. Just make sure they tag your restaurant social media and include a #hashtag of your choice.

If you don't know where to search, highlight in your social media that you are open to collaborations with influencers, they will contact you!

5. Social Media is about Community and Conversation

This is where your iPhone photo and video editing skills have power. Social media channels are about getting your customers talking to you and each other, all with one topic in mind. How much they love your brand!

People love your food, but more importantly, they love you.

One of the big reasons your guests dine with you is because of the experience you provide and how you make them feel, not just because of how delicious your food is, so build that community!

Marketers know 80% of your profit comes from 20% of your customers. Loyal ones, so stay connected to your loyal customers, but only through the social media your customers use or you will burn out.

If your customers are above 30 they will be on Facebook, so share news on your page, below that they will be on Tik Tok, regardless, all food fans will always be on Instagram, but don't use all channels. Only those that are seen by your customers.

Try and engage with them as much as you can. Videos and images do best, think of what can be shared to others. People love personality and helpful information, they want to know more about you, don't try and copy someone else, stick to your brand personality.

The key is to educate and entertain. Always inform your loyal fans about what's going on and have a regular calendar of content to share, never go silent!

Famous chefs around the world are taking the public into their homes through Facebook and Instagram live for the very first time to teach recipes and procedures that were once “secret”.

Content can include a variety of topics related to your brand, such as;

- Updates on your business – do you have some changes to your operations, do you have online ordering?
- Exclusive discounts for your Facebook fans when they book online through your website.
- Sharing of PR coverage
- Educational posts on the benefits of your dishes
- Recipes and tutorials from your chef (short videos work best)
- Behind the scenes videos and images of where the magic happens.
- Fun personality led pieces on you and your staff, let them get to know each and every staff member, not just the owner.
- Events. You can announce special events in your restaurant, or even hold live online cooking classes
- Question and Answers session related to cooking your cuisine.

6. Your online activity needs updated content

Your website should always have updated content. Why? Because fresh content, not copy and paste, will mean you go up the google rankings, this is called SEO (Search Engine Optimisation). The more content you have, the better, that doesn't mean long pages of information, fresh short pieces of interesting information work best.

People may not be walking by your restaurant like they used to, they are googling it. Ask your web team for editing options so you can update quickly.

As customers start looking up places to dine, where will you be in those search results? Take some time to optimise your online presence and ensure your social media channels are consistent so that when consumers do go looking for your restaurant, they can actually find you.

A great place to start is by making sure you're set up with Google My Business. It's free, easy to use, and allows you to manage your online presence across Google, including Search and Maps. This helps guests find you more easily through various marketing tactics that keep guests engaged.

Beyond your Google business profile, you should also be updating your website. When auditing all of the pages of your website, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the information up to date?
- Do customers know of the changes to their experience due to Covid restrictions?
- Does your menu view well on desktop PC and mobile devices?
- Are your images up to date?
- Fresh content can include your start up story, chef biogs, recipes, *etc.*
- Are you capturing emails and building a mailing list you can share a newsletter with? (Mailchimp is free but always make sure your web team add GDPR compliance policies when collecting information to stay above the law!)

You can also make sure to include information people may need to see regarding your operations, including:

- The current status of your operations (eg open



for dine-in, open for takeout only, delivery only etc).

- Your updated health and safety precautions post pandemic.
- Any government-mandated procedures you are following
- How guests can support you, *ie*, direct ordering online
- How to stay connected with your restaurant (email sign up, social handles, Tripadvisor link)

Most importantly of all, always encourage Tripadvisor reviews and share your Tripadvisor badges on your website and social media.



Shareena Ali
Chartered Marketeer

**Make
your brand
more
human**

We help you build a narrative around your brand's story and connect emotionally with consumers.



BRAND
STORY



Get **20% off** in our services with promo code **FRESHSTART**

Why Telling a Great Story will benefit Your Restaurant.

“People will never forget how you made them feel.” - Maya Angelou

“

A carefully crafted and well-told story doesn't just appeal to your imagination, it engages your other senses.

.....

One of the oldest and most powerful tools any business has at its disposal is being able to tell a good story. Let me give you an example.

“The air was always warm with the scent of saffron, cloves and exotic spices. Soft music flowed in from the concealed speakers as the owners greeted us with a smile and a genuine delight to see us. Each time they would remember our names and ask how we were doing as they led us across the plush carpet to a table, always beautifully set with linen napkins wrapped carefully about the cutlery.

The décor was truly stunning, rich colours and a vibrant attention to detail that left you in no doubt about the pride the owners had in their heritage. On one wall was a large tapestry – faded by time but still gorgeous. A lone tiger stalking through the leaves, his fur shimmering with gold thread.

One of the owners told me about that tapestry when he saw me looking at it. He told me that his Grandmother's Grandmother had been gifted it by a wealthy suitor and it had been passed through the generations, travelling across the sea when their family moved to England, it was one of their most treasured possessions.”

That was more than 20 years ago.

When I think of that tapestry I am transported back in time – I can clearly see, hear and smell that wonderful restaurant, The Royal Bengal, I remember the food, how it looked in the serving dishes and on the plate, and I remember how it tasted.

A carefully crafted and well-told story doesn't just appeal to your imagination, it engages your other senses. With the right words and focus, you can transport your reader into your restaurant and serve them a dream dish that you can make real when they visit you in person.

People love a good story. Telling a great story will help your customers understand you better and develop an emotional connection with you, making your brand more personable and memorable.

Your restaurant is unique. Even if you're part of a franchise or chain, it's still unique – your staff, your approach, everything you do is a part of what makes your restaurant special.

The likelihood that customers will spend time in restaurants that they've engaged with on social media ranges from 20% - 40% (Source: ReviewTrackers.com).

So, when you're deciding on your next marketing plan, think about what it is that you do. Create content that tells new customers who you are and why your food is special and reminds returning guests that you're the best choice.

Story Telling Tips for Your Restaurant

Who are you? Rather than rushing to discount your prices, give your customers a look at your history, why you're a restaurant owner, who your chefs are, what stories have shaped your world and come together to create your restaurant.

Do you serve unique dishes that have been created from family recipes? Have you got a secret blend of spices that they won't find anywhere else? Has your cooking style been taught and handed down through generations?

Tell people about your dishes and the design inspiration and ingredient selection, for example – one of our local Indian restaurants is well known for bringing in their spices from India and nowhere else, it became a Unique Selling Point (USP) and

people would visit because they'd heard about it and wanted to try an authentic experience.

When deciding on your story telling approach, here are some important things to remember:

- **Be Engaging.**

Even if you're speaking to an established audience, you need to remember that new people are always visiting your pages. Every post is potentially someone's first engagement with your brand.

- **Be Authentic.**

The stories you tell are going to help people form their opinion of your restaurant, it needs to be genuine and real – if there's a disconnect between what they read online and experience in house, then you're going to lose their trust and their patronage.

- **Have a Clear Goal.**

Why are you sharing the story? Do you want to generate a buzz about a new dish? Encourage more bookings? Educate your audience about a specific ingredient or dish? When you know what you're aiming to achieve, you'll find it easier to create content that matches.

- **Be Consistent.**

Once you start developing your brand and marketing activities, customers will find it easier to identify your brand personality and values. You need to make sure that you keep your standards high, your tone of voice consistent, and your posts regular enough to encourage them to keep coming back.

Whether you're looking to attract first time diners or encourage repeat visits to your restaurant, telling great stories is an incredibly potent form of marketing that you can use in your business.



Dawn Gribble

CEO and Founder
Virtual Solutions



Branding and Public Relations Go Hand-in-Hand

“ PR helps brands narrow their focus so their story becomes relevant to their target audiences. ”

While “branding” a product is all about promoting a term, symbol or a product name, public relations (PR) experts view their job as also pitching something with marketing and advertising efforts.

In a nutshell, branding is who you are—and marketing is how you build awareness. Branding is your strategy, while marketing encompasses your tactical goals.

PR is about selling the company or brand through positively managing the communication channels between a company and its stakeholders. Overall, marketing activities are trying to achieve direct revenue, while PR is trying to drive a positive reputation through an effective PR strategy.

PR helps brands bring their stories to life in a genuine and authentic way. Then narrow their focus so that their story is relevant to their target audience. The following are some illustrative examples of PR.

- Investor Relations.
- Government Relations
- Community Relations
- Media Relations
- Media Production
- Customer Relations
- Marketing Communications

Influencers.

Four basic categories of PR research activities are most common: media monitoring, PR audits, communication audits and social audits. PR research can be formal or informal, primary or secondary, qualitative or quantitative.

Good branding elevates a business and builds recognition and loyalty. Customers are attracted to brands that share similar values with them. When you showcase what you value through branding, customers will develop an emotional connection to you.

Branding comes first.

After all, your ultimate goal is sales, and marketing is the strategy used to optimise for sales.

A PR strategy will help you organise your PR activities and make strategic decisions about the best ways to communicate. It can also help you to use the stories in your business to draw in your target audience as well as increase your profile and build brand awareness.

The function of PR is to build favourable relationships with the organisation's key publics. Marketing is about promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising. Marketing and PR strategies target different audiences. Marketers work really hard to meet customers' needs.

PR builds up credibility

PR boosts an organisation's credibility, because it will operate through numerous trusted intermediaries. Plus, these intermediaries communicate to a certain audience which looks to them to filter out all nonsense.

The terms "marketing" and "public relations" aren't interchangeable. Defining what makes them different can help you create better-focused marketing and PR campaigns, with better objectives, goals and expected outcomes.

Here are three differences between marketing and public relations.

1. Function

The two industries have different functions. The function of public relations is to build favourable relationships with the organisation's key publics. Marketing is about promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.

“ A successful marketing campaign would be one that met sales goals and resulted in profit and high ROI. ”

2. Target audiences

Marketing and PR strategies target different audiences. Marketing's target is the customer. Marketers work really hard to meet customers' needs. In PR, audiences consist of a range of publics (customers, employees, suppliers, investors, media, *etc*), who collectively support the organisation's objectives.

3. Strategy success metrics

Both marketing and PR professionals measure the success of their campaigns after their implementation. However, marketing and PR strategies use different metrics to measure their success. A successful marketing campaign would be one that met sales-goals and resulted in profit and high Return on Investment (ROI). PR professionals define success through mutually beneficial relationships they have built with key audiences.

Both marketing and PR industries serve to achieve a company's goals and fulfill its mission. Understanding the differences between the two helps companies craft their strategies, better aiming them at different target audiences with specific focus and results in mind. Savvy marketing and public relations professionals should integrate marketing and PR into their strategies to achieve organisational success.



Sudha Saha

Celebrity Chef

FOOD SAFETY AND HEALTH SAFETY ISSUES

“

Education and training is a must at all levels. It is also the pedigree of chefs recruited.

”

I would say this is a serious issue in lesser known hotels and restaurants. Leadership comes from the top and the culture is filtered down.

It is a no brainer how important these aspects are in the food business. Not many owners/chefs/managers take this seriously until something major happens. There should be weekly and monthly audits to keep a tab on due diligence.

It is not only the due diligence, it is about understanding the process and reasoning behind the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP).

Education and training is a must at all levels. It is also the pedigree of chefs recruited. For instance, an owner would like to save money and recruit less able staff to run the business. This over a period of time has a negative impact on the business. Today so many nationalities work in the food industry, many of whom have no experience at all. This can be dangerous for the business.

The ability to understand what is food safety and health and safety is as important as driving revenue. Unfortunately, the business operators or staff may not be ignorant, but they may take shortcuts to complete their daily tasks.

Many food businesses run at a fraction of staff actually required due to high wage costs. It is difficult to balance between recruitment and training staff for an efficient business operation. This is an initiative that should be taken by the management and business owners of any food service outlets. Ignorance is no excuse. It can have an equal impact on the lives of employers, employees and customers.

Arup Dasgupta

Executive Chef





WHY TOTAL QUALITY IS A MUST IN A CATERING BUSINESS

Here's the way we define it at restaurant business. Improving quality, involves all our activities: Foods and services, Customer relationship and Management style.

Quality is nothing but continued attention to everything—from service floor to kitchen floor; from every product packaging to every process and policy.

“

There is a greater sense of urgency for selling, moving and serving our products.

.....

Attention to detail

Those details are in your hands. As someone has said, “Every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it. Autograph your work with excellence.” You are your quality controller. Individually and collectively.

Attention to detail will produce profit or put out of trade.

So let's define it specifically and broadly:

With internal policies, quality means: Are the employees happy with their work environment? How many times they have to communicate to get a problem solved? Can they come to work in a pleasant and comfortable environment? Do we make it convenient for them to handle their family as well as job responsibilities?

On another note, quality means: Does your manager tell you what the restaurant goals are? Do they give feedback about how you're

“
If you think we are in the restaurant business, you are wrong! We are in the business of retail sales. We manufacture a variety of products and merchandise in
” our menu.

contributing to those goals? Does your manager provide you with the necessary training to do your job? Does the manager follow through on promises?

Training procedures improve business reputation and teamwork for providing high quality service—the way the customer is treated.

If you think we are in the restaurant business, you are wrong! We are in the business of retail sales. We manufacture a variety of products and merchandise in our menu. Then, we offer it for sale to customers in a display service area known as counter tops, tables, and dining rooms. Unlike most retail operations, such as department stores, our product has a limited shelf life, due to potential spoilage.

There is a greater sense of urgency for selling, moving and serving our products. Our restaurant is not merely a place to eat or drink, but rather a building designed to accommodate, facilitate and promote the retail sales of food and beverage to customers through service. We provide service as a way of making sales to our guests.

Good team work can help to understand - **To serve is to sell : as**

- We don't buy gas; we buy heat
- We don't buy circus tickets; we buy thrills
- We don't buy the paper; we buy the news
- We don't buy glasses; we buy vision
- We don't buy dinner; we buy sales and service

The key difference between a restaurant and other retail sales organisations:

In a restaurant

We manufacture and sell our foods under the same roof. We know our guests are here to buy, not browse (no one comes in to try on chicken Tikka Masala). Our guests may return as many as three times a day (lunch, happy hour, and dinner). Although this is unlikely, some guests may be regulars, day after day.

In department stores

No one buys the same shoes, pants, or socks three days in a row. Department stores provide service. Restaurants provide hospitality: a warm feeling from feeding both the body and the soul.

More entertainers open restaurants and bars than department stores. Why? Because this is showbiz! Our function as a restaurant is to acquire and maintain business, to turn casual customers into loyal, repeat guests.



Altaf Hussain

Executive Member
Catering Circle



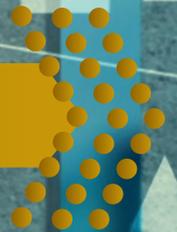
“
The road to success and
the road to failure are
almost exactly the same.

- Colin R. Davis

”



SUCCESS STORIES



ES2



Foyso Choudhury MBE MSP

The first Bangladeshi-origin Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) for the Lothian region.

Britannia Spice
Edinburgh EH6 6LB



Lothian's first minority ethnic MSP Foyso Choudhury MBE has been involved in the restaurant business since 1990, but the business has been in the family since the 80's. Growing up he used to help and naturally began to enjoy as well as show a keen interest in the field. He was always interested in Politics and the restaurant was the place for conversations, discussions and meetings. The restaurant became a meeting place not just to socialise, and talk about ideas but share visions and find new ways to do business and new technologies and techniques to discover. For him, it wasn't just a business but a way of life.

His favourite part of this business is meeting new people. Over the years it developed his confidence as he had to socialise and meet all kinds of people and he enjoyed it very much. It made him realise he enjoys helping people and being an active member of the community not just a business owner. The business helped improve his communication skills which allowed him to do charity events, help those in need as he had the skills and expertise to do so as well as arrange fundraising for many causes. And in 2004, he was made an MBE for his fundraising and charity work. The restaurant was never just a restaurant for him but a place where he grew as a person and gained many skills which have made him the person he is today. He has been a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) for the Lothian region since May 2021.

In choosing menu and ingredients, he discusses this with his chefs and together they brainstorm and research new dishes and ingredients. Their signature dish, Foyso confirms, is, "the Jalfrezi because it's traditional and tasty and one of my favourites. We want to keep the food authentic, fresh and true to its roots, so it's important for us to produce these to the best of our abilities rather than losing them by changing or evolving them into something else."

The staff in his restaurant are all trained and he tries to ensure they are happy to be part of the business and have a passion for the industry. They are aware of maintaining good standards and excellent customer service. Foyso loves what he does and hopefully they see that and are inspired to enjoy the work and always treat their customers with the utmost respect, care and attention.

They use social media for the businesses and try to interact with the public with promotions and advertising. "When everything's online you have to move with the times. We have modern equipment in the restaurants and ensure we are up to date with technology. Internet bookings and online services are a vital part of daily life now so we try to stay current and maintain a presence online," says Foyso.

Social media, he says, is good for reaching out to large numbers of people quickly. Before this they used local news to advertise the businesses. They can interact with people online now, take orders and bookings quicker. "So the internet is probably most useful tool for us," he says, "rather than posting out paper menus or leaflets to homes." They have a database of clients so they communicate with them with deals, events, and offers as well as help celebrate their special days such birthdays and other important days they may have. This allows them to not only build relationships with their customers but also keep them involved with the business.

"The biggest challenge to not only my business but majority of restaurants and businesses is the competition offered online by sites such as Groupon and other food sites which provide cheap alternatives," says Foyso. "I value quality over quantity and our food will always be the best we can offer and that won't be compromised. We also find that it's a challenge getting the best quality produce and spices for reasonable prices."

The hardest part of the job or being a manager, he says, is getting the right staff for the job. He finds this to be the toughest bit because he wants the person to be right for the job and keen as well as passionate and this can be difficult as not many young people especially ethnic minorities are choosing this as a career path.

The key ingredient to restaurant's success, according to him, has to be good tasty authentic food, reasonable prices and great customer service and standards. "We don't want to lose this industry, so more needs to be done to make it appealing and interesting to future generations. It's not just about food but skills, which need to be preserved."



Abdul Karim

Mahdi Lounge
Rye TN31 7AN



When Mr Abdul Karim first came to England from Bangladesh with his parents in 1977 at the age of 12, he had no restaurant experience. But two years later, the part-time job he took changed the course of his life and the lives of many. The Darbar restaurant in Bayswater, London is where Karim first encountered the life he would later devote to his servant. In fact, he loved the job so much that he wanted to work full-time in Darbar after earning his GCSE degree in 1980. There he began a journey that took him to many restaurants, including Wimbledon Tandoori, and since cooking was his passion, he continued to hone his skills as a restaurant manager, waiter, and kitchen worker.

Mr Karim kept dreaming of having his own restaurant, but knew that running a place entirely on his own at this stage would be too great a challenge and risk. So, with a sensible move, in 1986, he and his business partners opened Kent Tandoori (later renamed Baadshah) in Tenterden, Kent. The restaurant was a massive success and business was good. He spent most of his time in the kitchen, honing his skills as a chef, making traditional Indian and Bangladeshi dishes the likes of which were completely new in Kent.

As time went on, his family grew and his restaurant did very well. In 2002 he opened his own restaurant Mahdi Spice (named after his third son) in Rye, East Sussex. The location was a bold and risky move, as it was just a hundred feet away from The Gandhi, an established curry house that has been operating there for fifteen years. And soon another curry house appeared nearby on the main street. But that didn't deter Mr. Karim. Faced with the challenge of establishing himself in a new neighbourhood, he tirelessly sought perfection, covering every aspect of the business himself to make sure his personal touch was felt. Mahdi Spice soon established itself as the best curry house in Rye, winning many awards in its first year, including the prestigious British Curry Awards. Soon everyone swore by the quality of his South Asian cuisine and his unmatched customer service. Mr Karim is a customer service superstar who always goes the extra mile to meet customer needs. His mission is to ensure that everyone who walks through his restaurant doors leaves satisfied and

wants to come back. And they do! That is why his success is so evident.

Mahdi Spice was going better and stronger than ever when his sons entered the business. Jakaria is a successful business graduate. His second son Mahee studied computer science. Mahdi is a young, talented business student who is doing well at the University of Canterbury. All three have the qualities of distinguished entrepreneurs, with their own individual touch. Having learned so much from a young age from working closely with their father, each of them has learned the finer tricks of the craft from hard work, both in front of the house and in the innards of the spice festival that is the sultry kitchen Mr Karim has poured his passion into his business and into the three sons who will take it on.

Despite his burgeoning success, Mr. Karim remains rooted in his culture and traditions. He has been helping people in his hometown since founding Dighal Bak United Development UK in 2010 and is currently the VP of the organisation. In 2016 he founded and serves on the board of the Greater London Nabiganj Welfare Association. The association is dedicated to improving the lives of the Bangladeshi community in its hometown, which suffers from severe seasonal floods and catastrophic monsoons. Mr Karim is deeply involved in education and youth issues, and has been closely involved in the Zuktá Rajya Nabiganj Education Trust since 2006. He has been involved in founding both the Bangladesh Caterers Association and the British Bangladesh Caterers Association, and has been an executive member of both organisations since 2012.

Now that his three sons are gradually taking on serious responsibilities in the business, he hopes he can start planning for his retirement. With a warm and sincere smile, whether he welcomes the familiar face of a regular Rye or a newcomer, a tourist or a lone diner to the weekly curry evening, Mr. Karim represents a generous South Asian host. By taking over a four-decade-old restaurant and transforming it into an upscale eatery called the Mahdi Lounge, Mr. Karim has shown that engaging in competition is a clear sign of change to come.



Abdul Sattar

Bengal Tiger
London EC4V 5EA



Abdul Sattar has a wealth of experience in the food service business. A love of food and innovation in recipes has been with him throughout his varied and accomplished life. He opened his restaurant Bengal Tiger at the age of 25 in the year 2000, inspired by the success and ethos of iconic Asian restaurants such as the Red Fort in Soho. Throughout his business career, he has run 8 successful restaurants, and in each one he has managed his time to create unique dishes inspired by his South Asian roots and pushes the boundaries of what an authentic Asian restaurant can be.

Bengal Tiger was his first ever business venture and he was fortunate in acquiring a venue in an enviable location close to St. Pauls cathedral in the heart of London. Set on two floors, the restaurant sets the standard for trendy chic with cutting edge interior design, complete with its very own Bengal Tiger (of the ornamental kind). With a reputation for food that was a cut above the rest, diners flocked to the 140-seat restaurant every day of the week. At weekends, however, without the custom of the city workers, Sattar found that the venue was a lot quieter. He decided to expand his business and eight years went into partnership to open his second restaurant in Cannon Street in East London.

A third restaurant, Papadum, was launched in 2009 on Brick Lane the curry mecca of East London, followed up with involvement with Masala restaurant, one of the largest restaurants on Brick Lane.

Abdul Sattar is a gastronome who is passionate about food. Now, with interests in eight restaurants specialising in Thai, Japanese, Indian and Italian cuisines, he employs over 100 staff. Business success rests on his good team of trusted partners who look after individual restaurants. Sattar spends most of his time travelling from one restaurant to another to ensure they are running smoothly. Each of his ventures has its own character and style with no uniformity imposed. Sattar says his Thai restaurant in particular is very popular, situated in a historic area of London.

Sattar believes success has only come with hard work, commitment and effective communication. With a high benchmark for quality, fresh food and good service he strives to achieve authenticity, sourcing ingredients from around the world.

“ He treats each member of his team in the same fashion and expects each customer to be treated the same as well. ”

A firm believer in staff development he ensures his team are well looked after and takes a personal interest in their training. When it comes to training, it must not just be about what happens behind the scenes, but also how staff interacts with customers. He treats each member of his team in the same fashion and expects each customer to be treated the same as well. There has to be a welcoming smile when the customer arrives. At the table they must receive attention quickly and the food must arrive with perfect timing with consistency in the preparation and delivery.

His catering commitments take up most of his time but Sattar is also an investor in property and some of his restaurants are freehold. When he is not busy overseeing his many business interests he enjoys travelling and takes his family of wife and three children on holiday three times a year.

Eating out is another hobby but one that combines business with pleasure as an ulterior motive is keeping abreast of trends and developments in the culinary world. Abdul Sattar is a keen supporter of charities and gives to many charitable organisations. Mindful of his roots in Bangladesh, he has built houses for poor people in deprived areas of the country. He is also heavily involved with community organisations and is senior vice president to Jagannathpur Unnayan Shangtha. An impressive business person, he never does anything by half, giving his time and talent to whatever project he is on.



Aki Rahman

The Don
Milton Keynes MK9 1LR



Aki Rahman accidentally fell in love with how dynamic the Indian restaurant market was whilst working for his uncles. Any effort that was put into aspects such as marketing and tweaks to service was rewarded by increase in custom straight away. He gained enough trust over time and they gave him carte blanche with regards to business policy.

With the advent of social media slowly starting to make a bigger impact on revenue, Aki saw this as his chance to cash in on this cow that is the volatile Indian Restaurant game and started planning for his very own establishment.

He's loved every minute of it and has no regrets, even though he entered into it without the full blessings of his parents. They wanted more for their son who they privately educated. The education he received from his time at secondary school and college has set him up and influenced many aspects of how he view life and go about doing business.

Their marketing, ranges from closing the restaurant and renovating for 1 night on Halloween to scare the living bats out of their customers in the dark with night vision cameras to giving away a £1k diamond ring during Valentines. They've attempted drone deliveries of their curry, which made national news being invited onto the This Morning Show with Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby broadcast on ITV. Modern innovations and technology have shaped their business from state of the art EPOS systems and top end marketing companies to help spread and establish the brand.

Don Utd & Don Fc football teams have gone onto win many tournaments under the stewardship of Johirul Islam and Aki, respectively. They even organised their first tournament in 2019, raising £500 for Selfless.

Aki's business partners Hussain Chowdhury and Aziz Miah, together have created countless menus with their ideas coming from visiting the very best restaurants across the country, Amaya in Knightsbridge being their particular favourite. Thank you mum and dad for putting up with me and my wife and for always being there through thick and thin.

“The education he received from his time at secondary school and college has set him up and influenced many aspects of how he view life and go about doing business.”

Aki is always grateful to the Almighty for his success - "Allhumdulillah all 4 businesses have been successful and I give all thanks to Allah but I feel our creator cannot be happy that I have been profiting from the sale of alcohol and that is why I feel it's time to hang up my boots." "I've been part of the industry now for six years and initially my reason for diving head first into it was purely as a means to an end. The end being, Film making and Documentaries with the means being the income from the restaurants," he adds.

He has other big projects planned. One of them being a restaurant consultancy and marketing business called Isaacs Projects and another, which he hope to be a Just Eat killer.

His passion for film making has lead him to forming a film making production company called Aki Films . He also has a successful photography business called Aki Vision.

"Anyone going into the industry, persevere and put in hard work and effort into marketing and your venture will be fruitful In Sha Allah," assures Aki Rahman.



Akthoraz Miah

■ **Radhuni Restaurant**
Bucks HP27 9AA

■ **Radhuni Restaurant**
Bedford MK40 3PF



Akthoraz Miah has been in the business for 30 years, allowing him to build up a wealthy bank of expertise on how to run a business.

He was very passionate about food and cooking and wanted to move into this industry to make a contribution with his creativity and ideas that cultivated his current restaurant, Radhuni.

His favourite part of the business is creating new innovations over time and how it brings a young and thrilling feeling to his business. Also, it brings joy to socialise with his customers over food and to hear about their satisfaction with the service the business offers!

Akthoraz and his chef partake in lots of important research in how they can bring new dishes that is formulated out of special spices and fresh and locally sourced ingredients. He emphasises, "It is really important to ensure that our dishes are made with creativity and not something that is very common. This is what makes some of our highly rated signature dishes."

When asked how he motivates his staff to keep a constant service ethic, Akthoraz replies, "The business ensures that the staff are always updated in our regular staff training, to ensure that staff do not forget what standards should be set in providing customer service and keeping hygiene top notch."

They use EPOS system and online ordering service to provide their customers easier ways to eat their food quicker and in convenient places. Akthoraz is very happy embracing these modern technologies, as he believes, "When customers look back on their experience with you, the customer service will be as crucial as the food. Few customers are willing to rave about a dining experience where the food was delayed or the service poor, no matter how good the dishes were. How customers experience the service at your restaurant will also have a key role to place in how they review you online and whether your restaurant is recommended to friends."

For marketing and advertising they utilise social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to help other people know about them. "Current customers are able to send links to their friends and families to our page, which allows them to know more about the business and thus be more

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His favourite part of the business is creating new innovations over time and how it brings a young and thrilling feeling to his business.
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inclined to try it out" says Akthoraz.

There are always challenges in food service business, as he mentions, "Some of the challenges involve being ready and quick to solve any problems that may arise any time. Another challenge would also be keeping hygiene standards, as well as making sure cashflow is positive."

The key ingredients to his Restaurant's success are – innovation, determination, good communication and social skills, and most importantly, passion about food.

"Thinking about you would like to be served and what atmosphere you'd like to feel when you walk into the restaurant – apply this to creating the perfect restaurant experience," he advises. And, "The first step if you are going to open a restaurant is to draw up a plan – a business plan. It starts and ends with a plan; because it is the plan that lays out the roadmap to take you from where you are to where to go."

"I am very happy with where I am in the business, as I feel successful in reaching my goal towards creating a successful business, making loyal customers happy with their food and earning recognition for my staff and their hard work over the years. There's always room for improvements in the future, no matter how perfect the business is – at the moment the business is running smoothly," he confidently proclaims.



Ashraf Talukder

Tamasha Restaurant & Hotel
Bromley BR1 3AX



Ashraf Talukder followed his hobby into the trade, and when he started he could see how lucrative the trade was and his passion for customer service and also the quality of food which the chefs provide. "I could see where I could improve, and well, the rest is history."

Passion for food, diligence in service and welcoming ambience, he says, are three key ingredients to creating a successful restaurant. He always put food first. Authentic flavours are at the heart of his restaurants and the recipes he creates are based on Asian traditions in hand with modern twists to create signature dishes. But he is well aware that "Your restaurant may have great-tasting food, but if the atmosphere is bland or distasteful, it will overshadow the quality of the meal. On the flip side, a great restaurant atmosphere will keep your customers around longer and ensure that they'll return again and again."

He looks at his competitors and sees what he and his team can do different. He creates a system that allows him to remain consistent in everything he does. He has kept all his restaurants with the same concept of dishes. All his chefs are trained in the same style. They have a very unique menu and customers can taste this when they come and dine with them.

"You must rely on your own passion to drive the passion of your staff." He gives emphasis to both a passion for food and an agreement of how food should be prepared. He wants them to agree with what he is telling them. If they do not agree they will not be able to prepare truly delicious food. It is about the recipe, but it is also about how it is prepared. With discipline you have consistency so that when customers who order something one day can come back and think, "Ah yes, this is the taste I remember." He is very innovative and hence, he says, he was one of the firsts if not the first to bring out Theme Nights or Tribute Nights within his establishments.

Ashraf treats each member of his team in the same fashion and expect each customer to be treated the same as well. At the table the customers must receive attention quickly and the food must arrive with perfect timing with consistency in the preparation and delivery. They

should feel welcome and well fed. He does team building sessions in his business, where he asks his colleagues for their views on how they did and also where they can improve, plus he has incentives in place to reward his employees who go above and beyond.

He uses online ordering plus an EPOS system where his colleagues can take orders and he is looking at investing in the top of the range software so their efficiency gets better and they can concentrate on the customer.

Word of mouth has been his best marketing and it's free. Sending newsletters out to customer base has also been a key element. Newspapers have gone down due to the digital age.

Retaining staff is a challenge for him at the moment. As the business grew, so did the necessity of putting together a qualified staff. Ashraf says, "You have to make sure you have the right people for the job." Everyone wants to be next to family and they are finding it hard and he also can see that the volume of new recruits to the trade is very low. He says restaurant business always has unanticipated issues. He emphasises the importance of planning anyway. "You can usually overcome a couple of nuances or a couple of wrinkles, but you can't overcome a lot of them. So having a plan where there are fewer unforeseen challenges is the way to go," he added.

Customers are doing favour to you by choosing your restaurant. In turn you have to be ready to provide them with the quality food and service they have come to know. Your customers trust you and they put their faith in your skills to bring a new and unique plate that offers them a chance to experience something special.

Ashraf has been in the restaurant business near about 25 years if not more. Now he is thinking of semi-retirement: "So to do that I must pass down my experience to my protégé, so he or she can carry on with the reigns - If ever I can do that..."



Atik Rahman

Graam Bangla
London E1 6RL



“What I share with restaurant owners is how everything they do and every decision they make affects the bottom line,” says Chef Atikur Rahman. As a consultant chef, all he can do is offer guidance and recommendations that will help the restaurant meet or exceed its goals. He understands that structure and systems are vital to a restaurant’s success.

Atik was born in August 1977 in Moulvi Bazaar, Bangladesh. He came to this country with his family at the age of 19 and now lives in Chelsea with his wife Lina and son Samuel. Atik developed his passion for curry at the young age of 12. There, when he saw his mother cooking, his first curiosity about the journey of spices and ingredients began. He would always give a hand in the kitchen and it was then he had a great passion and immense interest in everything related to food and ingredients.

Celebrity chef Atik Rahman started of this culinary journey working at the famous Blue Bird Restaurant located in Chelsea. With his growing passion for food, Atik passed his NVQ Level 3 (professional cookery) at the Hammersmith and West London College. He also opened his own food education class serving individuals determined to learn the secrets of spices. To compliment his skills and talents, he provides chef consultancy, training and other curricular activities to develop the craft of cooking.

Chef Atik has been honoured as the private chef of Sheikh Bin Zayed of UAE. His first major achievement was when he won the 2007 Chef Award, and the following year he also won the British Chef of the year. “There’s a big demand for Chefs to reach celebrity status today and I have had my share of attention. This meant a lot as it is a privilege to be nominated by your peers as someone who is making a difference in a very competitive industry. However, for me, it is all about cooking and not about fame” says Atik.

He appeared in numerous Bangladeshi TV channels in the UK. His own show called Atik’s Recipe, aired every Sunday on Channel 9. This was his main show alongside NTV’s Atik’s Kitchen and Roshoighor on Bangla TV. All of these programs allowed viewers to learn Atik’s unique culinary skills.

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He would
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He has an outstanding and high-profile career providing food and hospitality consulting services, an extensive network and deep knowledge of the consumer and B2B sectors.

In addition to being a food and restaurant reviewer for several media outlets, he is also a regular contributor to a variety of publications including Restaurant Magazine, H-The Hotel Magazine, BBC Food, Pub Chef, Eastern Eye, The Asian Age and Tandoori Magazine. Chef Atik has also worked as a freelance restaurant inspector for Caterer & Hotelkeeper, covering a wide range of topics such as home delivery, training staff to increase sales, dealing with challenging customer experience, and many other informative features.

From restaurants to convenience food to consumer tastes, his understanding of the Indian and European food scene is extraordinary and is considered one of the leaders in the sector. Cooking is an art to him, and he considers each dish a masterpiece. That is why it is difficult to be faced with the need to work efficiently when you want each dish to be presented beautifully. This demand has allowed him to learn important skills he uses at his restaurant.



Iftekar Rahman Shawon

Mumbai Wokingham
Wokingham RG40 1XJ



Iftekhar Loves food tasting, he has passion for creating new dishes in his spare time. His parents' homemade cooking has inspired him to start cooking. He has been in the industry for the last ten years as an amateur working and supporting the family restaurants, however involved independently in the last two years with his own business, Mumbai Wokingham. His father and uncles were very supportive and provided invaluable advice as they have decades of experience in the catering industry which started from his grandfather in the late 60's in Britain.

They are always trying new and improved methods when it comes to food ingredient and good quality poultry and produce at their business. They promote healthy eating by offering vegan options on their menu, plenty of vegetarian and light snack options. Their menu is very different and dishes are incomparable and unique to their local competition. They are able to offer customers light snacks such as Mumbai sandwich, Tortilla wraps, healthy baps and burger alongside the usual traditional curries.

They used leaflet distribution as a marketing strategy since opening of the business. The quality of the print makes a huge difference in making impact, vibrant colours, smooth texture and good quality menu has helped them stand out against other companies using leaflets as their marketing tool. Online presence has really helped them from website views, instagram followers, facebook pages and weekly updates via sms marketing by promoting and keeping in touch

In the last two years being able to adopt with changes for COVID-19 and all the variant restrictions under the government guidelines has been very difficult but they have followed through. Moreover, the rising prices of good means the margins are small. The rising inflation means they are constantly challenging and menu prices are constantly under review. At this backdrop, "the hardest part of the job would be dealing with staffing issues. Labour shortages, shortage of skilled workers and commodity price rises means less choice and higher prices and struggling to healthy profit," says Iftekhar.

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They promote healthy eating by offering vegan options on their menu, plenty of vegetarian and light snack options.
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Iftekhar's SUCCESS TIPS:

Teamwork: Working as a team has certainly lifted the business. They treated their employees like a family and took care of them. Employee incentives and all personal support motivate employees, which has a positive impact on their day-to-day operations and thus a positive impact on their business.

Customer service: They like to hear from their customers and always make sure customer have a smile. Unhappy customers are always contacted further to continue with them.

Product and Cost: Having confidence in their products and knowing the real cost of their raw food against menu price, they follow a standard formula for pricing food by gross profit margin.

NEW BRANCH!

Mumbai Rickmansworth is opening soon!

It's been a great journey, a journey which has been very pleasant and fruitful. From starting at home kitchen to a shop front is proud moment for Iftekhar: "This achievement shall create a great example for our new generation who are looking to start up their own journey to the curry industry."



Julal Syed

Taj Tandoori
Cambridge CB1 7AA



Julal Syed has been running the Taj Tandoori in Cambridge for 16 years. This is a family-run business. After completing his BSc in Computer Science at the University of Leeds, an opportunity came across his way to take over his father's business. That was in 2004. Julal says his business grew because he heeded the advice of his father and other older executives who told him, "Concentrate on progress rather than perfection."

Favourite part of his business, he says, is the education he receives from it. "Whether that is creating new dishes on the menu, strategising the latest marketing techniques or working out clever ways to save and make more money." Being tenacious was one of the strategies Julal used to break into the business. He always advises others, "Don't give up. Be persistent." Also, having the best tasting products with the most expensive ingredients allows him to charge more. "You have to compete on the quality, because big businesses can't mass-produce that," he adds. "That's what sets us apart."

Their menu is a mix of both authentic and fusion street food. "We take our inspiration from the influences we have had in our lives." One speciality that is very popular among their regular diners is their Lamb Rogan Shepherd's Pie!

They have a family based culture at the restaurant. Everyone is aligned with the vision that they promote. "This makes the staff genuinely care which in turn provides a great service ethic throughout the team," says Julal. "Good people make all the difference."

"EPOS, food processors, cutlery polishers, dishwashers, combi ovens, digital loyalty schemes are all utilised to make the restaurant as efficient as possible," says Julal.

Using a marketing company has helped propel our business to new heights. They showcase everything we do using original, fun and creative content.

Running a restaurant is not always easy. Working evenings and weekends as well as managing everything in the day are quite challenging. "One of my biggest hurdles," says Julal, "is systemising the restaurant to a standard that I am happy with – pulling together all the elements, from turning

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He always advises others, “Don't give up. Be persistent.”
Also, having the best tasting products with the most expensive ingredients allows him to charge more.
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your concept into a working model to cultivating your employee base." The best advice Julal got when he started his restaurant is, "Do not take no for an answer. Overcome the obstacles set by others who try to talk you out of it."

"Increasing my knowledge continuously has been a huge part of the success of my restaurant," says Julal. He gives value to what experts say, "Don't get in the same swimming pool with the sharks." And urges aspiring restaurateurs to know their competition. "You have to know who you are up against. The best thing is to make sure you create a unique niche in the industry before you go forward. And always moving forward and keeping up to date with the latest trends and techniques are paramount." The basic truth of the restaurant industry, he says, is, "You are only as good as your last meal. And there is really no substitute for that."

Systemising the Operations, Marketing and Financials of the restaurant is Julal's goal. "Once this is done I will replicate the processes for new ventures as well as helping others with the knowledge I have gained."



Kamal Rob, Ambrish Jijode and Mofazzul Hussain

Khau Galli
Royton OL2 6AB



Kamal Rob is from a marketing background. He's been a very successful entrepreneur with a clear vision of success. The youngest member of a Bangladeshi family, he grew up watching his brothers work in the hospitality industry. He has always been interested in cooking. In the past, his family owned several restaurants and takeaways, where he gained a lot of knowledge over the years.

Ambrish Joijode (AJ) is from a family with a long business history in India. He has a clear business ethos. He always had a passion for food, having been born and raised in Mumbai where street food has always been a mainstay in all walks of life.

Mofazzul Hussain was in the wedding management industry. He has been passionate about opening a restaurant since he realised at 16 that there would be no wedding without food. He has worked in restaurants part-time and really loved it. When his friend Kamal approached him about investing in Khau Galli, he didn't hesitate knowing it was a great idea from the start.

They opened their restaurant, Khau Galli, in 2019, just before the pandemic, faced the challenges of lockdowns and restrictions, and still managed to be successful. The favourite part of their business is to see a satisfied smile on their customers after they relish Khau Galli's food. They're really excited for that moment. Traditional recipes sourced from AJ's mother in Mumbai are as authentic as can be with adaptations from their local customers' tastes. The idea is to make the customer feel the closest to the street food available on the streets of Mumbai. Green Lamb Chops is an ideal example of their signature dish, thanks to AJ's mother in India who is the inventor of this dish.

"Work environment should be enjoyable all the time," says Kamal Rob. "We provide fair wages with general tips for all employees. We have a system in place where employees receive performance bonuses, like rewarding a Yearly Star Performer and a Star Waiter/Waitress each month. We have a policy that all of our evening shift staff must sit and eat together at the end of each shift, which gives them time to bond," he added.

They use any technology that automates and makes the business self-running. Everything is

well structured with the right technology to save time and money while providing peace of mind. Their restaurant has its own server that helps them control most of the technology they use, and it's part of a plan to expand their business and manage all of their future sites. Cloud based phone, EPOS and online ordering solutions, waiter paging device, smartwatches, smart alarm system, cameras and password-controlled access for the restaurant make their life a lot easier.

"When it comes to marketing," says Kamal, "the best decision you can make is to give it to someone with a solid track record. Do not try to do everything yourself, especially if you are not an expert in this field. It's teamwork – my marketing is run by the same company as my EPOS and I treat it as an extension of my team. Choosing the cheapest option is not always the best, pay them what they want as long as they can give you results. I am doing very well in business, and I can improve even more by working with the best agency. Every business is different, and your marketing strategy needs to be tailored to your business based on various factors such as size, location, customers, and demographics."

KEYS TO SUCCESS:

- Simple menu is, unique to our customers.
- Putting a systemised structure in place.
- Innovation - They introduced outdoor VIP Pods private and an exceptional dining experience.
- Their marketing is something that they focus on a lot and they like to think out of the box.
- Charity - Another key part of success has been their contribution towards the NHS and keyworkers. They gave out over 10,000 free meals during pandemic. They supported school kids during pandemic over the school holidays, upliftment of the community, customer satisfaction.

Kamal's next move will be to expand out to different cities and build a brand that is recognised in the hospitality industry at home and abroad. Their own Khau Galli Soup Kitchen is set to launch soon and will focus on reducing carbon footprints.



Poly Rahman and Family

Palm Tree
London E7 9HA



Poly Rahman has always been involved in catering business since a very young age. She gained experience by working at Indian, Indonesian and Greek restaurants. Her passion about food business has always been on top of her agendas. She opened her own first restaurant in London in 2010 with her life partner Nadir Mazumder, which was a very successful in its own terms. It was a Turkish and Greek restaurant. And in 2016 she had her second business, an Indian Takeaway, in north London. She also started production of *Gawa Ghee* in the UK in 2018. Later on she had teamed up with Dean Chowdhury to open her catering business for weddings and special occasions.

Dean Mahdi Chowdhury who was trained to be a successful Restaurant owner by his father Mr Mohib Chowdhury, starting from a family business "Akash" an Indian Restaurant in west London. Dean was always eager to take new challenges. In 2011 he ventured out with "Palm Tree Banqueting Hall," where full event management is taken care of, whether indoor or outdoor.

Dean Chowdhury had teamed up with Poly Rahman and Nadir Mazumder in their *Ghee* production business branded as "SALWAH." Since 2018 its been very successful and still growing.

Nadir Mazumder, after his graduation went to India to train as a chef. Spending 6 years in Delhi and Mumbai at five star hotels facilities with Micheline star chefs he had gained the knowledge of north Indian cooking.

Dean, Poly and Nadir have started their own catering business "Panache Kitchen", providing

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Strong bonding as business partners and their individual skills together makes the business very successful and still growing.
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food to "Palm Tree" and other venues. Strong bonding as business partners and their individual skills together makes the business very successful and still growing.

As a team they believe, to be successful in any business, there is a need for 3 key ingredients.

- Passion
- Skills
- Execution

Most importantly, a good team and teamwork.



Mohammed Shahidur Rahman

The Rajdoot
London W1U 4HW



Shahidur Rahman has been in the restaurant business for over 24 years. He initially chose to start his restaurant business as a means of supporting his family, and he learned over the years how to make a business a success before opening his own restaurant with three brothers and a son. Then he translated those ideas into serving the local community with fresh, delicious food with impeccable service.

What he enjoys most is seeing how good food can bring people together, as he loves serving customers. According to him providing excellent customer experience in a restaurant is key to building restaurant community and repeat business. In an industry that is constantly changing, Shahid and his team are able to adapt to modern times while maintaining the traditional cooking methods and recipes that have made them so successful and Shahid believes this is the best part of the business.

They choose their menu and ingredients with care. It all starts with the seasonality. They only use the best produce available at the time from their local suppliers, and freshly ground spices that allow their dishes to speak for themselves. Their menu is inspired by dishes across the region of South Asia, and they place great value on authenticity, with dishes such as the popular Bahari Lamb, a dish of lamb that has been marinated for 24 hours in a complex masala, then cooked and served in a thick spicy sauce that will leave you wanting more.

Shahid always motivates his staff to keep a constant service ethic. Their staff are trained to be professional, attentive and always willing to go the extra mile for their customers. If a customer would like a dish's heat to be adjusted, they do their best to accommodate for that particular customer as no two patrons are the same, and their staff recognise that, and for this Shahid is so proud of them.

"It is no denying fact that," he emphasises, "one of the most important factors to consider when running a restaurant is the quality of the customer service you provide. Good customer service includes providing courteous and quick service to meet customers' needs during their dining experience, which can determine whether

or not someone becomes a recurring customer." He believes:

- "Happy customers generate more positive feedback and reviews for your restaurant.
- Excellent customer service can increase revenue.
- Satisfied customers are more likely to become regular customers.
- The longevity of a business usually relies on good customer service."

"While we consider ourselves traditionalists in terms of the curry house experience, I quickly recognised the need for modernisation and keeping up with the times. We use tablets to seat customers according to their reservations, and systems that enable us to process bookings and online orders quickly and efficiently", says Shahid.

They often utilise social media platforms such as TripAdvisor, Facebook, Google and Yelp as they believe they play a huge role in showcasing a restaurant's online presence and its popularity. "We have been constantly ranked as one of the best Indian restaurants online as a result of this focus and attention to detail, while offering special discounts from time to time to those who follow us on social media, and for special occasions."

When asked, what are some of the challenges of being a restaurant owner and manager, Shahid replies, "There are a number of staff shortages across the industry, as it takes a lot of skill to train as a chef at an Indian restaurant and I believe the government should consider allowing restaurants to bring in skilled workers from the region as Indian restaurants have been the backbone of the service industry for many years, and we have been one of the biggest contributors to the British economy."

Shahid wants to serve the community, nationally and internationally, to those in need, as his parents taught him the importance of giving back at an early age, and that's what he's always pushed for in his business and will continue to do so in the future.



Abdur Rahman (Mona)

- **The Grand Sultan**
Port Talbot SA13 2PA
- **Chillies**
Pontarddulais SA4 8TH
- **Chilli Too**
Swansea SA6 5LH
- **Chilli Express**
Swansea SA4 8SY



After working in the industry for some time, Abdur Rahman Mona felt that he had gained enough experience to open an establishment on his own. He needed to do this to improve his life, the lives of his wife and his eldest son at the time, while also supporting his family in Bangladesh. He also felt that he could offer something back to the community he was working with. He has been in the restaurant business for about 36 years. His favourite part in his business is meeting all different types of people from various backgrounds whether it's business people, sports men or women or politicians. His unique selling point would be offering some dishes that are not available elsewhere and one of his restaurants is situated on a golf course with views over a lake.

Abdur Rhman likes to use the best and freshest ingredients. He enjoys experimenting with dishes and has also developed some of his dishes with the help of various chefs trained in Kolkata and Mumbai.

He always believes in treating staff the way you would want to be treated yourself if working somewhere. He always tries and offers a good relaxed atmosphere to work in. Mr Rahman says, "At my restaurant, I hold regular meetings with the staff to keep them motivated and engaged. Once your employees are motivated, they will do their job flawlessly and keep your customers happy." He adds, "the most important principle of any great restaurant service is that there should be consistent and effective communication between all of your employees. Employees should be trained to communicate professionally. Regular employee meetings should be held so that all employees are on the same page. There should be good communication between the wait staff and the kitchen staff who ensure timely service once the food is prepared. When jobs are shared among people, coordination becomes easier."

He goes on to say, "when you're hiring and training your staff, focus on the qualities such as empathy, patience, and clarity to respond promptly when they are interacting with their customers. It may also be your opportunity to introduce and strengthen your company culture, teach employees how to follow your

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In his business all share the responsibility for ensuring that the customers are treated professionally.
”

own chosen etiquette protocols and deal with difficult specific situations.”

They use their own online ordering platform and also use Purple I EPOS system. "If you use technology in the right way, things can work well for you," says Mr Rahman. They use social media rather than the old-fashioned newspaper adverts for their marketing.

His team of staff, his son and nephew always strive to use the best products, and the quality of products and services, as well as his loyal customers, are the key to the success of his restaurant. In his business all share the responsibility for ensuring that the customers are treated professionally. "All customers have some pre-conceived expectations form the restaurant before they visit it. Both food and service are essential for delivering an excellent restaurant service to your valuable customers. Good restaurant service will help in leaving an overall positive impression of an excellent dining experience and also help in retaining customers," says Rahman.

He's getting a bit ahead now, so for the past few years, his son has been actively running things behind the scenes. Ideally, he is looking forward to semi-retirement and spending time with his grandchildren. He is always trying to adapt to the times and difficulties that this trade is facing at the moment. "Rising costs of produce, cost of living leading to higher salaries, pressure on profit margins year after year, and price increases are just some of the challenges he is facing. The pandemic has hit everyone hard. I hope things will get better soon," says Mrvv Rahman.



Sajjad Rahman

Taste of India
Sheerness ME12 3JD



Sajjad Rahman was only 10 years old when his father opened the business and he still remembers that very day. He loved everything about the business and he knew he wanted to be a part of this someday, to follow in the footsteps of his father as a businessman. He joined the industry from a tender age of 13, working part time as a waiter in his father's takeaway. He had to beg his mum to persuade his father to allow him the opportunity.

Inspired by his upbringing in the bustling kitchen of his family-owned takeaway, Sajjad has a strong passion for the food and flavours of traditional home cooking. Since opening the restaurant doors they have been proudly dishing up traditional Indian sub-continental food in its most authentic form. Dedication to their cultural roots and cooking all of their food the traditional way is at the heart of everything they do.

Their menu is simple and doesn't have many special dishes but whatever they make, they do it to a high standard. You won't find any pastes, powders or colours in their kitchen. From their variety of all-time favourites plated straight from the tandoor to their wide selection of starters or side dishes to accompany your meal, their menu built from a long-established history of family cooking is guaranteed to have something to your taste.

Their business embraces modern technology. They have online ordering with their own bespoke App, front of house is all digital, and they are constantly looking to use technology to their advantage. They are currently running various online advertising on different platforms. Doing so has helped them stay ahead of their competitors. "We typically don't like to do any advertising that we cannot track our metrics," says Sajjad.

When asked how they motivate their staff to keep a constant service ethic, he said,

"We have a family like relationship with all of our staff, we laugh and joke whilst maintaining good practices in the workplace."

There is a list of challenges that he faced throughout his entire career in this business. But, "the biggest challenge is finding competent staff who can carry out their duties to a high standard.

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They have online ordering with their own bespoke App, front of house is all digital, and they are constantly looking to use technology to their advantage.
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The hardest part is getting people to see things as you do. It takes a lot of skills and dedication to run a business in this industry. Problems will arise along the way, so you have to solve them to the best of your abilities," says Sajjad.

His success tips are simple. Consistency and continually evolving the business has been key to their success. According to him, restaurant ownership is more than just a career, it's a way of life. It will require you to get used to something that you're not used to doing. "The flexibility and adaptability of restaurateurs are what make them one of the most prevalent types of entrepreneurs. Those who have to deal with changing markets and consumer behavior as well as other external factors such as the economic environment must come up with the best business ideas and solutions," he believes.

"I want to be able to help fellow business owners get an advantage through digital advertising, most don't realise how powerful it is and that you can actually see real results, track metrics to see profitable return on your advertisement.

Perhaps, I should launch an agency service!"



Shah Shahid Hussain

Entouraj Indian Kitchen & Bar
Kidderminster WR9 0PW



Shah Shahid Hussain has always been passionate about food, and perhaps that drives him to open a restaurant over 30 years ago. He says when restaurants are too focused on profits they make sacrifices to quality that will not provide customer satisfaction.

The menu, according to him, reflects more into seasonal availability and local produce, which, he believes, is the key element of restaurant trade. Regarding the ingredients, he says, "I always use the good quality product and don't believe in cutting corners."

He adds, "As mentioned before my menu is more seasonal, I change it every 4 months, keeping the popular one and replacing the less popular." He takes a special care about the healthy option without compromising the flavour. His menu is created by his award-winning head chef Sudha Saha. Recognised by both the Michelin and Hardens Guides, Sudha has created a menu that celebrates the most exquisite Indian flavours. Regarding signature dishes, Shah says, "This is always the USP of our business, which showcases the creativity, innovative ideas and technically accomplished cooking."

They use the EPOS system for the Front of House and menu engineering for obtaining a very healthy Gross Profit (GP). In kitchen, they use Rational Combi Oven, Blast Chiller, Thermomix, Blow Torch, dough mixing machine and robot coupe. This modern kitchen technology, says Shah, "greatly enhance the process of efficiency, making it easier, safer and more efficient to cook meals and keep our food fresh." The appliances allow his staff to serve the food more quickly and professionally. "If you are planning to join food service business or to enhance productivity in your business, you will need the right equipment and utensils and a plethora of knowledge how a catering business works actually."

When it comes to a professionally designed commercial kitchen, according to Shah, it should have kitchen equipment that perfectly fits in the available space. Nowadays, he says, the manufacturers are introducing an innovative range of kitchen equipment to cope with the space problems faced by restaurant owners. These modern appliances are specially designed while keeping in mind limited space availability and are

a perfect choice for restaurateurs. "The modern equipment offers time management, comfortable work space while reduces the chance of accidents, injuries and fatigue. Such equipment increases the overall efficiency and productivity of your restaurant workers and also keeps them healthy."

As to the marketing and advertising initiatives, "Use of social media, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, newsletter through our website, regular interval of using PR, inviting the food blogger helped us a lot," says Shah. "I think giving adverts on newspapers and local magazines does not give much impact," he adds.

To keep the business floating, Shah introduces innovative ideas and marketing gimmicks, and he has to push the boundaries extra hard. Then staffing is another big issue as it is hard to get good staff. He says, due to market inflation the operating cost is going high, which gives him tough times to keep the good GP level.

Also, people management skill is the hardest part of his business, says Shah. The management in his restaurant sets goals to the staff, providing training and personality development programme, and gives incentives once the goal has been achieved. All this motivates his staff to excel. "But fundamentally our performance is about keeping the enthusiasm and drive of the team – and it's held up remarkably."

For success, according to Shah, "Questions to ask yourself are; how will my restaurant connect with people? Why does my restaurant exist? What type of people am I looking to attract? What do they read or watch? How do they spend their spare time? What is the best way to reach them? Knowing why and for whom your restaurant exists is crucial to success." He says, "Keeping the standard consistent - in both food and services, never cutting corners, continuous marketing plan and well trained staff are key ingredients to your restaurant success."

Shah is thinking of expanding his business across the UK in the next five years. As for the next few years, he is clear about the major trends that will dominate the British Bangladeshi restaurant scene. "Value is going to remain key, and the quality and provenance of food will become more important. I'd like to expand my brand throughout the country with good food and excellent services."



Shamsul Islam Shelim

Viceroy of Windsor
Windsor SL4 3BP



Shamsul Islam Shelim began working in the restaurant industry in 1980, as a part time waiter in Beaconsfield while enrolled at College doing Business Studies. He moved to Henley in 1982 to support a new family restaurant and enrolled in High Wycombe College to study Engineering. By his third year, he realised that he was more interested in his work than his studies and he wanted a challenge. This led him to working more hours at the restaurant. Eventually, he opened Carterton Tandoori in 1985 where he would get his first taste in management. His early years saw huge success. Business was booming.

Then he moved to Windsor and opened the Viceroy of Windsor, in 1987. The first restaurant was very small. They would have regular queues out of the door and around the block. Needing extra space, they relocated down the road in 1994 and have been there ever since.

Since then, he has opened numerous other restaurants across the country but he spend most of his time in Windsor, as he has also been the local Councillor for the local area for over 5 years.

His favourite part of his business is being an integral part of the community. Restaurants are the hearts of towns, where local people get together, to catch up with old friends, for business meetings, date nights, and most importantly great food. He takes great pride in being at the core of this community.

In all his years, he has never been afraid to experiment and try new things, but there must always be balance. "Keeping ingredients fresh and recipes simple is the key to good food. Overcomplicating dishes for the sake of wanting to be different can sometimes be more of a hindrance than a smart move," he says.

From the waiters to the chefs, his staff are his family, "For an effective and motivated workforce, you must respect them as individuals and in turn they will respect you."

They have increased their online presence in the last few years. They have redesigned their website using modern tools for an accessible and engaging website, and have also embraced social media. In particular they have targeted Google Reviews and TripAdvisor where they interact with their customers and generate feedback in areas they want to improve. It hasn't been a surprise that using these methods have directly translated to a large increase in online bookings and orders.

They also implemented the EPOS system for takeaways increasing the overall efficiency of the restaurant by managing the amount of orders going into the kitchen. The internet is increasingly important for attracting a new generation of customers, but Shamsul still prefers word-of-mouth for recommendations. "As part of the community, their customers treat my restaurant like their own and as a result they will speak highly of you and recommend your restaurant to other locals and tourists."

There are many challenges and difficulties in the restaurant industry. "The biggest sacrifices, I believe we make, is having our work take over our lives," says Shamsul. "Working long hours and weekends takes away from your social life and the time you do have free is when everyone else is working. This can be the same with family; you do not get to see your partner or children as often as you like and the free time you do have is spent doing the day-to-day necessities of life," he adds.

He has been in the industry for almost forty years now and his personal key to success comes down to hard work and dedication. He has been an honest businessman, worked hard to serve his community, both here at the restaurant, and as councillor for his borough, listening to the concerns of the people and how to improve his community. He has taken this further by being greatly involved in local charities and tackling the homeless issue.

In terms of the restaurant industry, he has always done his part to create a community for all of us working in the industry, trying to unify our goals and discover solutions to tackle the many problems our industry is facing. By involving himself in so many different avenues has given his life a purpose, and that is what carries him from day to day. Working in the industry, he had the opportunity to be President of the BBCA, and he has left it in very good hands.

"Lastly," he remarks delightfully, "I should emphasise the utmost importance of family. Without the support of my family, my wife, my brothers and uncle, as well as my children, I would not have been as successful."

"I would like to retire before too long to spend more time with my family, and hopefully pass on the business to the children and grandchildren one day."

"Looking back, I am pleased at the rapid improvement our industry has seen over the decades, and hope that this evolution will continue with future generations."



Shanoor Miah

Café Jeera
Harpenden AL5 4ST



Throughout his life Shanoor has been passionate about food and creating innovative dishes. He's been doing this since childhood when he used to watch his mother cooking food and was fascinated by what she created. He gets excited about cooking every day and feels so lucky to have been able to parlay his passion into a successful business. Inspired by his mother's cooking, he started working in restaurants when he was a teenager, but always had a dream of opening his own business and offering something new and exciting to his customers. And as the years have gone by he has just got better and better. The key is to keep moving with the times, to keep innovating – which Shanoor has done.

“Customer experience plays a major role in your success,” he believes firmly! Talking to the customers and listening to their feedback is his favourite part of this business: “Their compliments are wonderful to hear and it makes it all worthwhile. The numbers of times I've heard people say they've had their best meal or they've never had something so full of flavour before is amazing. I love what I do and this makes me very happy.”

Their unique selling proposition, Shanoor says, is their ability to evolve, to find out what the customer likes, what works well and to change if necessary. He adds, “We have many regular customers and we're able to remember their favourite dishes. Everything is cooked from fresh so we can make our dishes to the customer's preference.”

From years of growing up in a family of cooks and from travelling around the world he has gained experience of how to choose his menu and ingredients: “We talk to chefs from all over the country and from places in other countries, we share tips and advices and in our spare time we apply them to find out what works and what doesn't.”

“The ingredients must always be fresh and high quality, which makes a huge difference,” he says. They have recently changed their menu and introduced new dishes which people in the region won't have seen before. The chef specials are many favourite dishes that take traditional Indian cuisine to a new level of intensity. These dishes are very popular with their customers.

To Shanoor, the kitchen staff are extremely

important, from the Kitchen Porter to the tandoori chef. “They are the cogs to the engine and without them we don't work. I have no doubt that they love what they do and enjoy it but they also have families. Families and happiness come first always and we are very accommodating to ensure there is a work-life balance.”

Personal relations strategy and marketing are of paramount importance to Shanoor and his partners. They know each restaurant has a story to tell but without a strong PR strategy, that story may never reach your customers. PR helps the brand authentically connect with your customers, increase your visibility and elevate your credibility, keeping your brand out of the advertising abyss. One of the investors in the business runs an award-winning PR and marketing company. They manage their press, adverts, events and social media. Shanoor and his team consider this as the key to bringing customers in.

They are innovative working with local partners, like the council, to try new initiatives, which is great for community engagement. They often get asked for vouchers by schools and people setting themselves challenges which they are always happy to offer as it supports the community and gets their name out there.

The hardest part in his business, Shanoor thinks, is when a customer doesn't have a good experience for whatever reason: “It doesn't happen very often but when it does you take it personally and you feel that you have let them down. It may be no fault of yourself or the staff, it might be that the person is not terribly friendly but you still take it personally.”

Shanoor is very clear on simplicity. ‘Work hard and listen’ is his philosophy: “There are many people out there that have years of experience. Listen to them, take advice, share your own, and never be afraid to learn.”

During the pandemic he sold his shares after a four-year partnership business at Maya Indian Kitchen & Bar. Currently, he has started a new restaurant called Café Jeera on the basis of partnership. “We're a two-year-old business and there are new ways we can improve, grow and develop.” Shanoor wants his new venture to be one of the best celebrated restaurants in the country and he won't stop until it is.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Motin Miah

Bangkok Lounge
Harpenden AL5 2SP



Motin's family had never owned a restaurant, but they were heavily involved in restaurant life. Members of his family all worked in various capacities within the trade. As a Bangladeshi, food was always an important part of family life so this ritual became combined with his ambition to have his own business. He felt that the market was a little saturated with Indian restaurants, but it was on a return trip from Thailand that he decided Thai cuisine was what he wanted to get involved in.

The business model he had was applicable in any restaurant but there was a huge learning curve in understanding the cuisine, flavours, ingredients even the culture and the philosophy of the Thai people. He had to get this right in order to succeed. His professional job allowed him to bring in the experience of management and his due diligence filled in the gaps.

Motin is a bright, hardworking and a very ambitious individual who has gained experience in people and project management. He has a long track record of ensuring projects are delivered to the highest quality, within budget by effectively organising, managing and utilising all resources. He is able to lead teams on commercial and industrial levels. He is always actively involved in all aspects of the project life-cycle and can deliver high-value projects in matrixed organisations and across different disciplines. His work is based on setting realistic targets and working hard to achieve these. The expertise and knowledge that he has gained allows him to drive profitability and improvement through strategic growth plans. "Every decision, good or bad, has been a learning experience and has brought me to where I am today" he adds. Motin is a BSc Hons graduate in Computer Science.

BUSINESSES: Past and Present

2003: Opened Blue Orchid Thai Restaurant, Aspley Guise, UK. Within a space of 5 years he had expanded this brand to 7 totalling 11 restaurants. In July 2007 he sold the brand so he could concentrate on property development.

2007: Opened Bangkok Lounge Thai Restaurant, Harpenden. This was expanded to include a further 2 outlets. Bangkok Lounge has been recognised as one of the top 3 Thai restaurants for vegan foods by Metro newspaper in 2016 and more recently

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Every decision, good or bad, has been a learning experience and has brought me to where I am today.
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'Best National Thai Restaurant of the year 2019'.

2013: Import and export of commodities worldwide. This was a short term venture and has since been sold on

2014: Executive producer involved in Asian films and Arts projects

2014: Founder member of British Bangladeshi Caterers Association (BBCA)

2014: Joint Treasurer of BBCA.

2016: Director of Windsor Hotel and Resort

2016: Life Member of Bangladeshi Cricketer Supporters Association UK

2018: Membership Secretary of BBCA.

2018: Director of World Glazing

2019: Managing Director, BioGrade Solution

Motin is affiliated with the following charities: CAP Foundation (Community Against Poverty - Ambassador), Amir Khan - Water AID, Macmillan Cancer Support, Channel S RFC (Ramadan Family Commitment - Ambassador). He is also hoping to launch a foundation in the memory of his late father Al Hajj MD Aziz Miah. His work within the community involves monthly immigration surgery attendance along with other Bangladesh High Commission staff.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Tofozzul Miah

Bayleaf
London N20 9HH



Installing EPOS System enables Tofozzul's Bayleaf to boost sales and cut labour cost during peak business times. He is a firm believer of IT and Bayleaf has used advanced EPOS systems since 2001, where they have collected over 12,000 pieces of data from their customers to date. They use this database to remarket via three streams: SMS, Email and Direct Post. By implementing this strategy, they do not leak profits, especially with the current breath-taking fees being charged by third party online companies. "Also this has made us much more efficient when we are packed, and given our waiters the opportunity to take more tables." Tofozzul explains. They also have their own website, app and online ordering system, with each of them improving efficiency for both customers and themselves.

Tofozzul is an innovative and forward-thinking entrepreneur. He is the founder of the award-winning Bayleaf brand and Hiltop Motors Ltd, located in North London. From a very young age, he always wanted to be in control of his destiny and realised that the self-employment route will allow that. He did various labour-intensive jobs as a young man straight after school and on the weekends, which included working in the rug trade and on the Sunday markets. By the time he was a young adolescent he had enough capital to open up his own Indian restaurant. He took this leap in South East London at the age of 17 and unfortunately the venture wasn't too successful. However, he did not give up. The principal lessons he took from this was that one really needs to entirely understand all work streams of a business when it is a micro size enterprise and in the case of a restaurant he needed to understand the roles of managements as well as front house and kitchen.

He worked in a Punjabi owned restaurant for the next 3 years, where he gained invaluable knowledge and experience. He learnt many tricks of the trade and saved some money too for future investments. An opportunity soon arose to become the partner of a Restaurant in North London. He took it, with some reservations as he was buying into this partnership knowing that the restaurant was not doing too well at the time. However, he managed to change things and after several months, this business was considerably profitable. This made him even hungrier to go and open his own establishment. He quickly realised that food delivery was an emerging market (in the 1990s), and with not many Indian takeaway/restaurant establishments doing deliveries, he took a bold but exciting decision of venturing into it. This is when he opened Bayleaf Takeaway on the Whetstone High

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He did various labour-intensive jobs as a young man straight after school and on the weekends, which included working in the rug trade and on the Sunday markets.
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Road. The business won many awards and accolades within the first few years alone and he has not looked back since.

5 years ago, he found a gap in the market for a fine dining Indian restaurant and opened up Bayleaf Restaurant in 2013, and it has been hugely successful since. By having a separate establishment that solely focuses on dining, they are able to direct their focus on not only the quality of food, but the presentation too, and provide the best experience for their customers through impeccable service.

Amidst his journey in the catering industry, he began a hobby of buying and selling cars from his home in 2006. Immediately he saw impressive returns, which led him to expand by purchasing a forecourt which held up to 20 vehicles. Upon continued success, he expanded even further by purchasing a car showroom in 2009. This is when he established Hiltop Motors, a quality German car dealership stocking up to 80 cars. It has been very successful since, with a current turnover of nearly £4m a year. He also likes to engage in local charity as well as voluntary work and he is a founder-trustee of Bangladeshi Welfare Society of Barnet, currently holding the President position. He also carries out voluntary work as the current Chief Treasurer of British Bangladeshi Caterers Association (BBCA).



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Touris Ali

Eastern Eye
Newton Abbot TQ12 2EU



Touris Ali started his career with restaurant job in 1982. Food is his passion and he loves to cook. He wanted to be his own boss and hence started restaurant business and materialised ideas he has gained from many years of experience in hospitality.

Established in 1990 in Newton Abbot's Queen Street, he has been successfully running his restaurant Eastern Eye. For last 29 years under his ownership, they are busiest and first Indian restaurant in South Devon. In 1990 Eastern Eye started with 12 tables. In 2003 Touris refurbished and expanded the premises with 31 tables and celebrated an opening party for three nights inviting all of their loyal customers. Once again in 2013, they expanded the sitting capacity to 41 tables and refurbished the restaurant with an interior decoration. Now they can accommodate up to 160 persons in the restaurant.

Touris loves to face constant challenges in his business. Every day is different. Every shift has a new surprise, and he enjoys the challenge of handling them. He also likes how he improves more with each one. He always handles a new situation better than the last. Sponsoring local sports, supporting local charities, special compliments for customer's special occasion, buying best quality ingredients, Social Media – these are his brand building and marketing approaches.

They have designed their menu with selective dishes from South India, North India, West Bengal and coastal areas. Their most popular signature dishes are Komla Chicken, Murgh Ghassi, Chicken Angara, Chicken Chengazi, Rajasthani Laal Maas, Sri Lankan Seafood Curry, Chennai Ghosth, West Bengal Murgh, etc.

Touris is well aware that employees can make or break his business, so he motivates them by telling them they are doing a great job and giving surprise bonus when an employee does a great job, and he also mentions that he feels very lucky to be working with them. He frequently communicates with his employees, let them know how the business is progressing and conducts 10 minutes briefing every day before they start work.

Touris uses innovative technology and modern equipment for his kitchen and front of the house. He advertises and promotes his menu items through live events, emails, website, Facebook, Twitter, free Wi-Fi splash page, which attracts and reaches to the customers efficiently and they get quick response.

Long time working experience staff, family involvement, keeping adequate funds in reserve, getting a memorable logo, ensuring a unique menu card, investing on customers, having responsive website and social media pages, are the key ingredients for Eastern Eye's success in South Devon for last 29 years. The business has given him much social recognition. He is currently the Vice Chairman of Devon Bangladesh Association and a Trustee of Bishwanath Education Trust.

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Every shift has a new surprise, and he enjoys the challenge of handling them. He also likes how he improves more with each one. He always handles a new situation better than the last.
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VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Mohammed Abul Lais

Eurasia Food Services
Reading RG7 4PW



Tadley Tandoori finds success and is making more money by following an interesting strategy: not going after money. Since the opening of his establishment, owner Mohammed Abul Lais's goal has been to offer diners high quality, traditionally cooked foods. "We dominate on customer service, too, but our target is total quality" he adds. "I personally interact with customers and have paid close attention to their feedback."

Mohammed Abul Lais is a successful businessman, outstanding community organiser and well-known philanthropist in Berkshire. He left for the UK when he was only 16 and entered professional life. Through his sincere and hard labour on one hand he attained success in his business and on the other being the eldest son of the family he educated all his brothers and sisters. He was born in Sunamgonj, Bangladesh. His father late Alhaj Abul Bashor Md. Mashuk Miah was a restaurant trader in the UK. He was a philanthropist who came over to the UK in 1963. After sitting the SSC Exam in 1975, Mohammed Abu Lais left for the UK along with other family members. On arrival in the UK he started working in restaurants and at the same time continued his studies.

He opened his first business, Curry Garden, in 1978 in Newbury, Berkshire, which was later established in Tadley, Hampshire in 1982, on a partnership basis. Then again in 1991 he opened Curry Garden in Reading. In 1985 he established 'Rajdoot Restaurant' in Cirencester Town in Gloucestershire on partnership. In 1991 he established a company named Eurasia Food Services. He established a first Thai and Bangladeshi restaurant named 'Café Blue Cobra' in the small-town Theale in greater Reading area in 1996.

Mohammed Lais is one of the founders of Basingstoke Islamic Society. Initially he was the Founding Secretary of this organisation and later on he served as President for 3 years. He is the Founding Member of Reading Central Jame Masjid, member of Basingstoke Chambers and Commerce, Thames Valley Chambers of Commerce, and a founder of British Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce in the UK. He has made special contributions towards the establishment and development of Amria Mosque and Amria Madrassa based in his own village. In 2016 he built an academy building in Amria Madrassa,

“ Since the opening of his establishment, owner Mohammed Abu Lais's goal has been to offer diners high quality, traditionally cooked foods. ”

which was opened by M A Mannan MP, the then Deputy Finance Minister of Bangladesh. During the devastating flood in 1988 and in 1991 he raised funds £1400 and £11,000 respectively and sent it to Bangladesh through British Red Cross Society for the flood affected people. Mohammed Abul Lais and his brother Absar Md. Waess have established a family trust after their father's name - Alhaj AB Mashuk Miah Foundation. Mohammad Abul Lais is the trustee of this Foundation and his siblings are members. Mohammed Lais is a founder trustee of Bangladesh Female Academy in Derai. He served as the President of Dakshin Sunamgonj Upozilla Association UK.

Mohammad Lais got married in 1984 to Nazma Khatun Qureshi, and they are blessed with two daughters and one son. First daughter Shumana Lais obtained Honours degree in Investment Banking and Finance, from Reading University, worked for KPMG as an auditor and also completed ACA. Shumana is married to Dr Omar Siddique and blessed with one son. The other daughter Sameera Lais is studying at Aston University. Son Shumel Lais, graduated in Business and Marketing from Bournemouth University, worked for Saatchi and Saatchi and currently running his own business in Marketing. His company Appsumer Ltd was listed on startups 100 in 2017 and 2018 respectively.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Shamsul Alam Khan

Haldi

Portsmouth PO5 2SG



“Merely offering good food and good service is not a guarantee of success in traditional dining. Your marketing goal should focus on repeat business”, says Shamsul. “Today more than ever, you need to create a memorable customer experience.”

As marketing strategy, Trip Advisor and Google as well as menu innovation and leafleting have worked for him. Newspaper ads don't always work, as he says.

Like many other successful entrepreneurs, he gives great value to customer experience, and says, “You can have the greatest concept, recipes and talent but if your restaurant can't deliver a quality customer experience consistently, people won't come back.”

He adds from his experience, “Better systems not only ensure a more predictable customer experience, but also make the restaurant less dependent on the owner's constant involvement in daily operations.”

Shamsul Alam worked as a waiter in various restaurants. Gaining skills and knowledge in running a restaurant gave him motivation to start his own business. He has been in the business for 10 years now.

Meeting and generating new customers and general public, introducing new dishes in a modern twist to traditional curry house are his favourite part of this business. He has created dishes using vegetables from Bangladesh such as uribisi/sim bichee, shatkora, etc. His popular signature dish is Sylhet Gosht.

Their multi-award winning and 27 years experienced chef, has put together a delightful menu that gives their customers a wide choice of delicious meals.

Shamsul Alam's staff are always valued and they have input in providing good quality food. “Your employees are your most important asset because it takes happy employees to create happy customers. Your employee experience drives your customer experience and your customer experience drives customer loyalty, word of mouth and sales”, he emphasises on.

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You can have the
greatest concept, recipes
and talent but if your
restaurant can't deliver
a quality customer
experience consistently,
people won't
come back.
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According to him, the key ingredients to restaurant success are:

- Creating a loyalty card to reward customers by offering a free dish on their fifth visit to the restaurant
- Promoting more offers and discounts
- Offering training and work experience to students wanting to learn the restaurant trade
- Serve non-greasy fresh quality food by using local organic produce for better taste

Samsul says, “healthy eating promotes a healthy successful business”. To him, having professional skilled staff, giving his 100% to provide quality food and services and support from family are some other keys to success.

Shamsul intends to open traditional Bangladeshi/ Indian homemade style cafe serving breakfast and lunch.

You can have the greatest concept, recipes and talent, but if your restaurant can't deliver a quality customer experience consistently, customers won't return.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Ana Miah

Juboraj Rhiwbina
Cardiff CF14 6HG



Ana Miah started in the industry as a teenager working in a local Birmingham restaurant. He made the decision to do the very best he could and after a few years his family opened their first restaurant in London in 1982. He moved to Cardiff and opened his first restaurant as an owner in 1989.

Of all the enjoyable aspects of running a restaurant, such as the financial reward, there is little more rewarding than building relationships with local customers that can develop into real friendships. Ana thinks they manage this in the Juboraj by focusing on this relationship. They work hard to make the couple-of-hours customers choose to spend with them a special experience and by providing consistently good food.

Ana likes trying foods in different restaurants looking for new ideas. When he finds something that he likes he takes the idea back and work with his chefs to add a Juboraj twist and create something new. They have a few unique dishes on their menu. Most notably the Chicken Kolapuri, their biggest seller and the Jamdani Hash, a duck dish they created in the early days, made famous by Ruth Jones in her enormously successful television show Gavin and Stacey. Although there are now many restaurants serving a Jamdani Hash, people come from all over the country to taste the original at the Juboraj!

The Juboraj Restaurant Group is one of the oldest, and almost certainly, one of the great Indian and Bangladeshi restaurants in Wales having won numerous awards. For well over 20 years there has been a Juboraj in Cardiff of which the Rhiwbina restaurant with its sumptuous Georgian interior is one of the originals. The Juboraj pride themselves on combining traditional authentic dishes with a fresh new contemporary approach bringing you the best flavours the Indian sub-continent has to offer. The Juboraj Guarantee ensures that only the highest quality New Zealand lamb and Welsh beef, and the finest 100% fresh chicken breast and freshest seafood available, is used in their dishes. With a warm welcome and friendly attentive staff you can be sure that time spent at Juboraj, whether it be a light lunch or a candlelit evening meal, will be time well spent.

Apart from TripAdvisor, which Ana finds too open

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Ana likes trying foods in different restaurants looking for new ideas. When he finds something that he likes he takes the idea back and work with his chefs to add a Juboraj twist and create something new.
”

to abuse, one of the most challenging parts of the business is keeping the staff happy and then, once they are fully trained, keeping them permanently. You can't run a restaurant by yourself. You need good quality reliable staff. He thinks it's down to the manager to be on top of their game and that example passes to the staff. They hold a monthly meeting to highlight problems or come up with ideas for improvements.

Juboraj team use a website with online booking and ordering and they keep in touch with their customers using social media. Of all their marketing initiatives he finds the big sport screenings they put is very successful. People enjoy them and pass on the experience by word of mouth. In the same way Ana has always been a big part of the local community, getting involved in festivals and sponsoring sports teams, and the like. Even if it's a simple gift voucher for a local raffle. The kind of recommendations community work generates are priceless.

Ana strongly feels the industry needs to work closely with government to make it easier to bring skilled staff from outside the UK and to enable training initiatives to work with and encourage future business owners by making the industry more attractive to them.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Abdul Karim Nazim

Maharani Camden
London NW1 7JN



It all started in 1963, when Abdul Karim Nazim's father and uncle opened Maharani Camden. At this point the Clapham branch was already opened but his father was not involved. His father was his role model as he was growing up so he wanted to get involved in the family business, too. As he was growing up, he started learning more and more about the Indian food industry and in 1984 he joined the family business and have been involved ever since. They are a family-owned and operated business.

Since being involved in the business, there are a lot of things that motivate him but also make him smile. For example, being based on Camden High Street, he gets to meet new people from different backgrounds everyday as Camden is a huge tourist attraction now. Also, being able to maintain a good relationship with his regular customers and local businesses would be his favourite part in having the business. Furthermore, being one of the oldest Indian restaurants in Camden, more and more people wish to come and visit them, making their loyalty to Camden High Street their unique selling point.

As he has worked in Indian restaurants from a young age, he understood the industry a lot more and realised that he would need to create some different flavours in order for him to stand out. As he is from Bangladeshi heritage, he knew about the ingredients used in an Indian restaurant which is why he was able to create his speciality dishes with ease. They cater for all palettes, whether you like your curry extremely mild, or extremely hot with a desi twist.

Motivation plays a big role in any business, and it is up to the owner/manager to ensure that the staff are motivated. To be completely honest, wherever you go, money will always be a big factor of motivation. However, he likes to keep things different here as he gives his staff a bit more responsibility than being a simple employee. Loyalty is important to him and any business owner will tell you, loyalty is key to running a successful business. His head-chef has been with him for over 20 years now as long as one of his waiters. Due to this loyalty, he makes sure they enjoy working at Maharani.

“

He likes to keep things different here as he gives his staff a bit more responsibility than being a simple employee.

”

As this is the 21st century, it is crucial to be using and keeping up to date with modern technology.

They started off with using the basic Just Eat machines but as social media is a huge thing now, they are slowly getting on to social media platforms. They are already on Instagram. They also use modern technology for their online orders and marketing. Marketing on social media is vital as it is the only way to attract an audience. In 2011, marketing was done by going door to door and posting leaflets, but this is not as effective as advertising on social media.

Being a business owner comes with many challenges; the hardest would be during the quieter seasons as it disrupts the cash flow. Quieter seasons would be the first few weeks of January as Christmas and New Years pass, and also during summer. It is not easy to run a successful business but the key ingredient to doing so is being patient and love what you are doing. If you do not love the industry you are in, you will not love your business enough to make it successful. Also, as they are a family-owned and operated business, it was important for them to stick together



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Manik Miah

Maharani
Ipswich IP1 2NJ



“ They advertise their business online through a local business directory which promotes local independent businesses through their website and their social media channels, to help us reach a wider audience. ”

Manik Miah has over 40 years of experience in the restaurant and takeaway sector within the UK. He has had a few restaurants over the past 40 years. His experience, ability and wealth of information about food is credited as responsible for the many prestigious awards his previous restaurants have achieved. A wealth of management and operational experience is in the forefront of his contribution to the Maharani.

Manik Miah is from a family background who had an Indian Restaurant before the Second World War in the UK. His uncle opened the first restaurant before the Second World War in London (Earl's Court). At that time, he had 5 restaurants. They still own the restaurant in Earl's Court and it is run by the family. Manik was encouraged to become a restaurant trader because he wanted to introduce Indian/ Bangladeshi cuisine to the Western people and make the Asian food more popular, which is now one of the most loved food in the UK. He has his own restaurant in Ipswich. His brother had a restaurant there and that's why he moved to Ipswich in 1989.

Enjoying and mixing with the customers, making friends through the restaurant, customers enjoying the food and service returning back for more quality food are the traits he is fond of. His unique selling point is the excellent quality of food, as well as being

a good host and being friendly with customers.

Nowadays customers are looking for quality and different types of new food. Manik Miah and his award-winning chefs are well aware of this. To meet and exceed customers satisfaction they always use fresh products, locally sourced, where possible. They have more than 15 speciality dishes, two of these are the Haandi which is mainly cooked home-style in a casserole pot, and the Bangladeshi Macherbiran Bhuna, and in all these are used ingredients such as meat, chicken, prawns each cooked with fresh herbs, spices, mustard oil, etc. The restaurant caters for vegan and vegetarian diets and other dietary needs.

All their food is cooked in the traditional way, using traditional methods of cooking, including the clay ovens. They use technology to promote the restaurant through their website, on social media and on Tripadvisor. Most new customers are recommended by their existing customers. They sometimes advertise in local papers, also in the cinema and theatres. They advertise their business online through a local business directory which promotes local independent businesses through their website and their social media channels, to help reach a wider audience.

The greatest challenge as a restaurant owner is delivering an excellent customer service and food to all customers every time they visit. But Manik's staff are very loyal to him, all of them have been working for him for the last 18-20 years. Any good performance and best services are recognised and rewarded. They work hard for the business to succeed.

Manik's restaurant provides good quality food and good service at competitive prices and his wish is to be a good host to all his customers. It is also about being part of the local business community, being well respected, and being part of the wider Bangladeshi and Ipswich community. He also actively supports local, national and international charities, and he supports local education as a member of the Corporation at Suffolk New College. He is also on the Board for the Users Group at Ipswich Hospital.

Manik would like the Maharani to continue as a popular community focused restaurant, and personally he would like to increase his charity work.



Mohammed Abdul Ahad and Brothers

Millennium Balti
Leamington Spa CV31 3AG



“
Forming personalised relationship with the customers is all the more important given the restaurant's decidedly intimate appeal.
”

While all new restaurant ventures are risky, they may be one of the most unlikely restaurant success stories that we've ever interviewed. Ahad started working with Indian restaurants and takeaways at a very early age. He worked for different branches of Millennium Balti, which was opened in 2000 (Nuneaton, Hinckley, Leamington and Coventry). Then in December 2014 they bought one of the branches in a very busy area, Leamington. It was very difficult, a lot of major improvements were needed to the actual building as well as menu, etc. The business wasn't good, there was so much competition, they struggled a lot in the early days. But they didn't give up, his family supported him at every step of the way. All four brothers motivated each other, every member of the family contributed in their own ways.

The restaurant required improvements inside the building as well as increasing customer base. He did his research by asking the public and checking out other competitors. He and his family did all the works of refurbishment and menu innovation. Their menu is extensive and there is something for everyone. But they kept the design, layout and descriptions simple and easy to read and understand. They built the business up slowly but strongly - taking extra care of all the ingredients, using fresh produce and maintaining the quality. The food price is standard and reasonable, but the quality of their food is very good.

Their restaurant has a very friendly environment where all customers enjoy the food and the atmosphere. They now have a huge regular customer base. Most of the customers they know personally and know their likes and dislikes. For example, some of their customers when walk in, they know what they will order without asking! They are impressed with their memory and service. They look after everyone with love. Developing personalised relationship with the customers is all the more important given the restaurant's decidedly intimate appeal.

They have passion and willingly provide the best possible food and service to their customers. They do everything with love. That's their secret ingredient "love". Well not secret anymore! Quality speaks for itself. You can taste the difference in their food compared to others. They look after everyone, whether new or regular customer, however small or big order. They also cater to individual tastes and preferences. For the health conscious they have a wide range of healthy vegetarian dishes and grilled food where oil is very minimum, and they use low-fat yogurt. The extensive menu, that they have, caters for all tastes, flavours and textures.

Though not on Just Eat, they have built up a fantastic customer base for their delivery and takeaway service, where a majority are now regulars. Even they are getting new customers through word of mouth. As its family run business, all members come to rescue if required. Everyone in the family helps each other and providing the best for their customers. They always take part in charity events.

They give free meal vouchers, donate money, sponsor cricket team, football team, and medical team. They are always looking for ways to improve. In August 2017, they attended a culinary workshop in Newcastle where they met various Michelin Starred chefs, executive chefs and managers and learnt a lot. Also they participated on a live Restaurant Talent Show on Channel 5. They have won many local and national awards for their excellent customer support, hard work, quality food and service. They have also been recently appointed the official Youth Ambassadors for the Asian Restaurant Owners' Network.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Ziaur Rahman Choudhrey

Montaz
Newmarket CB8 8DN



Ziaur Choudhrey, who is one of the cofounders of Montaz, a popular modern Indian restaurant in Newmarket, Suffolk, started his career at a restaurant called The Merryland Tandoori in 1992.

He soon established himself as a key member of the business and was offered a partnership in 1997. It was a time when the restaurant sector was in good stead and banks were forthcoming with finance, suppliers helpful in giving credit and staffing levels adequate.

With Ziaur's strengths being in menu innovation, interior design and above all customer service, these important aspects encouraged him to oversee many projects, starting from Montaz St Ives, Montaz Bourne, Montaz Ely, Masala Lounge Rugby, Chai Kai Tea House St Ives, Chai Kai Tea Company and Montaz Newmarket.

Ziaur says, "I have worked with many different budgets to open different sites, but key to all is good simple food using great produce, excellent and friendly customer service along with presentation of your food and your restaurant. A key factor of Montaz Newmarket's success is to use local suppliers providing quality local produce and on trend, sustainable fish and meat with the latter for example being used in our award winning signature dish "Slow Roasted Ox Cheek."

He adds: "What I enjoy the most is the evolving nature of our menu, taking traditional recipes and giving them a modern spin, which in turn also creates stories for marketing the restaurant as I believe the old way of newspaper ads and leaflet drops are long gone. I believe strongly that creating such material on where perhaps you may have travelled and been inspired to create recipes or even having something on my staff like staff days out, gives the marketing material an emotional depth and personalises everything to the extent that your brand becomes very liked by your clientele. It gives them a connection."

Like good, contemporary and knowledgeable restaurateurs, Ziaur takes his inspiration from both recipes of long ago to current ones from

“ I believe strongly that creating such material on where perhaps you may have travelled and been inspired to create recipes or even having something on my staff like staff days out. ”

Michelin starred chefs because he says, "it gives me an understanding of how food has evolved, how recipes and cooking techniques have changed along with how customer tastes have developed and adapted. Add to that the fact that Britain has such wonderful ingredients and we can utilise them in our cooking to show to the rest of the world. "

With the wealth of experience under his belt, Ziaur next intends to create a rollout brand within the catering industry so watch this space!

I have worked with many different budgets to open different sites, but key to all is good simple food using great produce, excellent and friendly customer service along with presentation of your food and your restaurant.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Mohammed Siddiqur Rahman

Raj Garden
Watford WD23 2DQ



“ They specialise in Traditional Bangladeshi dishes with a modern twist and key is fresh produce. Their signature dish is called Rajestani Chicken and HariAli Chicken. ”

Mohammed Siddiqur Rahman had worked in Indian restaurants for many years and wanted to apply the ideas he had developed - that was his main motivation. Serving his customers and seeing them happy and very satisfied are his favourite part of his business. The unique selling points of his business are consistent and great customer service with excellent and unique cuisines.

Siddiqur and his team choose the menus from their own ideas developed over many years taking inspiration from traditional Sylheti cooking. They specialise in traditional Bangladeshi dishes with a modern twist and key is fresh produce. Their signature dish is called Rajestani Chicken and HariAli Chicken.

Siddiqur's team have constant training and customer feedback and also they have a friendly and fun atmosphere in the restaurant. The marketing and advertising initiatives that have worked for him are leafleting, local press and social media but most importantly word of mouth has been a great driver of his business.

To face challenges of being a restaurant owner and manager, he says, "You have to wear many hats, you are the manager, the chief taster, the supply checker, the bookkeeper and also the inspector of hygiene - all these things you have to be on top of everyday routine." The hardest parts of his job, according to Siddiqur Rahman,

are maintaining staff and hygiene of all areas of the restaurant on a daily basis. He considers the key ingredients to his restaurant's success have been consistently delivering good service and food that customers love to recommend.

Siddiqur Rahman was born in 1971 in Luton, Bedfordshire. He completed his GCSEs' in Denbigh High School in 1987. At the age of 16, Siddiqur started working part time at an Indian restaurant which initiated his interest in the restaurant trade. At the age of 19 he opened his first thriving business, an Indian takeaway which he later converted to a restaurant in Oxhey, Hertfordshire called Curry Cottage. After the success of Curry Cottage, in 1997 he went on to open another Indian restaurant, Raj Garden in Bushey, which became his most successful venture, receiving many awards for their service and support of the community. Since then, he has opened several other restaurants around the country but in 2002, he decided to diversify and invest in another industry.

In 2002, he began his career as a property investor buying houses to re-develop them and put them on the rental market. This has enabled him to develop his property portfolio and diversify within the property industry. He is the director of Luton Property Management Ltd and the senior negotiator for Simply Move, overseeing the management of properties. This business is fast becoming one of the busiest property management companies in its area. He is also the owner of M.S Rahman Properties (Real Estate) and S&Z a property development company.

In addition, he is a member of several business associations such as one of the Directors of the UKBCCI and an EC member of BCA. He is also a member of the National Landlord Association and a member of the ARLA which is an association for residential lettings. He believes giving back to society is a vital part of life. Therefore, he is the secretary of Jalal Pur Welfare Association which gives unprivileged children in Bangladesh a chance to transform their lives. He is also part of the advisory board at Dokhin Surma Committee, a role passed on from his father. In the UK, he is a dedicated member of charities such as the Peace Hospice and local charities especially in the Watford area, for which he has gained certificates and awards from local MPs and Mayors.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Shajanur Raja

Sopna Indian Restaurant
Caernarfon LL5 2BB



“Our staff is our greatest asset, and we work hard with them to create extraordinary dining experiences.” He is indeed a hard-working honest businessman.

Shajanur Raja loves to work and mingle with people and he knows that the restaurant business is a people business, which makes forging good interpersonal relationships between restaurant staff and customers critical. Shajanur points out that he has always treated his employees well and considered them like family. “Great employees are happy and successful, which in turn creates pleased and loyal customers”, he adds.

His award-winning restaurant Sopna Tandoori is well known for quality, variety and hospitality. Set in beautiful rural Caernarfon, 8 miles from popular Llanberis, Sopna Indian Restaurant delivers authentic home style Indian cuisine with a taste of distinction. From its signature dishes to its beautiful atmosphere and a large variety of Bangladeshi, Indian and some fusion food, it goes out of its way to make certain that it has something for everyone.

Their chefs use only the highest quality seasonal produce, locally sourced wherever possible, and pride themselves on creating delicious food that tastes good. From the spicy, aromatic notes of Sher-E-Bangla to the sumptuous textures of our Lamb Jaflong; from a rich Sopna Special Biryani to the fragrant King Prawn Dilraj, they are proud to share an array of enduring classic dishes alongside some of the most visionary contemporary Indian cuisine to be found anywhere in the UK today.

“Warm hospitality is at the heart of everything we do,” says Shajanur. “Because we are family owned and operated, we personalise your visits and attend to special needs. Our staff is our greatest asset, and we work hard with them to create extraordinary dining experiences.” He is indeed a hard-working honest businessman.

Shajanur was born in Salamtilla, Moulvibazar and he came to the UK in 1989. He used to live in Oldham (1989-1991). In 1991, he moved to North Wales and started working in a restaurant. After that he worked for several restaurants in North Wales. He started restaurant business at Pwhelli North Wales in 1996. Since then he did not have to look back. His hard work, honesty, sincerity and good community works took him to this position very fast. From one restaurant, now he is the owner of five outlets, a Takeaway and a Cash & Carry under the name of Sopna group. Also he has some property businesses located near his restaurants and in Bangladesh. One of his restaurants, Sopna Tandoori gained Wales Curry House of the Year Award in 2007 and 2010. In 2011, he opened the first Bangladeshi Cash & Carry at Bangor in North Wales. He has a good reputation with local Muslim community and also with local Welsh people.

Shajanur loves to do charity work and donated lots of money for the people in need in Moulvibazar, Bangladesh as well as in North Wales and different parts of the UK. Currently he is the Founder Chairman of three charity organisations - Bangladesh Womens Aid, Britain Bangla Social Development Foundation (BBSDF) and Nasiruddin Hafizia Madrasa at Hiyala Shahebbari in Hobigonj District. Every year he organises charity night at each of his restaurants and raises money for his charity works. He is also involved in many local and social activities both in the UK and in Bangladesh. He is the Director of the Exposure Developments Ltd, which is based in Bangladesh since early 2009. He is currently working with a project of building a private hospital in the name of Hason Raja and Jubeda Vanu Hospital, in his birthplace in Bangladesh. He is the member of Greater Sylhet Council UK and acts as the Vice President of its Chester and North Wales Committee.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Mujibur Rahman Junue

Spice of India
Twickenham TW2 7LB



A restaurant is a public space, where people come to eat food and interact. It is all about socialising, community spirit and making people happy and energetic. Mujibur Rahman Junue realised that this 'character and spirit' of the restaurant business really matched with his personality and ever since he wanted to run a restaurant. Although he wanted to open a restaurant to start off his career, the first opportunity that came on his way was in the form of an off-license, which he ran for 6 years successfully. He was able to fulfil his dream of opening his own restaurant within 3 years running the off-license. It was a great learning experience managing both the businesses at the same time. However, he gave up the off-license to fully concentrate in the restaurant business which was his passion. He spent the last 23 years turning his restaurant into one of the best restaurants in the area. He has two more branches, where one is leased out currently.

Mujib's favourite part of the business is being of service to his customers. "I don't compromise on staff strength and quality of service which made us very consistent all these years. Being consistent made our customers, very confident that they can depend on us, any time, any day", he added. They aim at 100% customer satisfaction by providing unmatched customer service and exceptionally tasty food. His unique selling points are consistency, quality of the food, service, and decor. He chooses his menu by assessing his competitor's offerings, their prices, and the dishes. He tries to be different and unique than what they do. His signature dishes are Lamb Shank, Shukran Chicken, Murg Khandani and Sho-Coo-Tee Chicken.

"Stress, anger and negative attitude are contagious. I never allow this to pass onto my staff. I stay positive and pleasant all the time, which makes my staff very open to me" says Mujib. "I motivate my staff by demonstrating leadership qualities and showing how to put customer needs first, by having regular meetings with them", he adds.

Mujib is very much interested in the usage of modern technology in his business. Right now he has his own online order system and booking system that helps him save money, and helps his staff work efficiently. He has his own self-

“ He chooses his menu by assessing his competitor's offerings, their prices, and the dishes. He tries to be different and unique than what they do. ”

checkout system being developed, for Takeaway collection orders. This will free up his counter staff on busy evenings. Customers can come, order a takeaway and pay using the integrated card machine, all by themselves. Right now, he is waiting for a demo of his Restaurant's new dine-in management system which will use cloud-based technology and latest payment system such as Google Pay and Apple Pay. With this, he is aiming for faster service for his customers and an efficient work environment for his staff. Also, his technology providers are doing some research on Bluetooth beacons, which will provide him Live data about his business on his mobile, such as air quality, temperature, how busy the shop is etc. These data will be analysed to find business insights later. Facebook Boosting and Google AdWords have been really helpful. Even though they are paid promotion, return on investment justifies them.

Mujibur Rahman Junue is the Deputy Secretary to Bangladesh Catering Association (BCA) and General Secretary to West Bangladesh Welfare Association. He is the General Secretary of Boliar Bhag Madrasah Committee (UK), in Bangladesh which is responsible for a lot of charitable work. Also, he is the Deputy Secretary for Richmond and Hounslow Islamic Centre.

His next move would be to increase his property portfolio and open a fast food grill restaurant.



VOLUME 1 PROFILE



Abdus Shahid

Valley Connection
London N9 7EP



Abdus Shahid is a multi-award winning chef. He was born and raised in a rural village in Bangladesh. He recollects how his mother would grow all her own vegetables and use them; fresh from the ground to the plate. This is what he wishes to closely emulate in his own restaurant. His earliest memory of cooking is when he used to boil fresh potatoes with his mother on an open fire outside. His mother would finely chop shallots, coriander red dried birds-eye chillies, and smother the potatoes with this mixture. She would also add some salt and mustard oil which was the *piece de resistance*! His siblings and he would always be hanging around the kitchen. Hence, his inspiration for cooking has originated from his childhood. However, when arrived in the UK, Shahid was amazed by the beautiful creations of the chefs in all the restaurants in London.

His first kitchen post was in a restaurant in Stoke Newington in Hackney. He worked as a kitchen porter but very quickly the chef realised that Shahid had the skills to become a chef. He encouraged him to assist in the food preparation and eventually allowed him to cook when he was on leave. It didn't feel like hard work as Shahid was so impressed by his newly learned skill and creations; making rice and curry look like a piece of art!

This is what inspired him to open his own restaurant. He discovered that he had the skill, work ethic and professionalism to run his own restaurant. He has three restaurants now – Ballingdon Valley, Moza, and Valley Collection – all based in Suffolk with menus created by himself. Valley Connection is one of Bury St Edmund's largest and smartest Indian restaurants, with award winning chefs. Recently renovated this elegant and stylish restaurant can accommodate up to 110 diners in sumptuous and contemporary surroundings, setting the tone for an up market dining experience with menus that focus on Indian continental dishes to Bangladeshi cuisine. Atul Kochhar is Shahid's food hero. Atul, he says, has promoted Indian food to a level that was historically occupied by predominantly European chefs.

Shahid's restaurant serves a delightful selection of traditional and Bangladeshi meals. He always

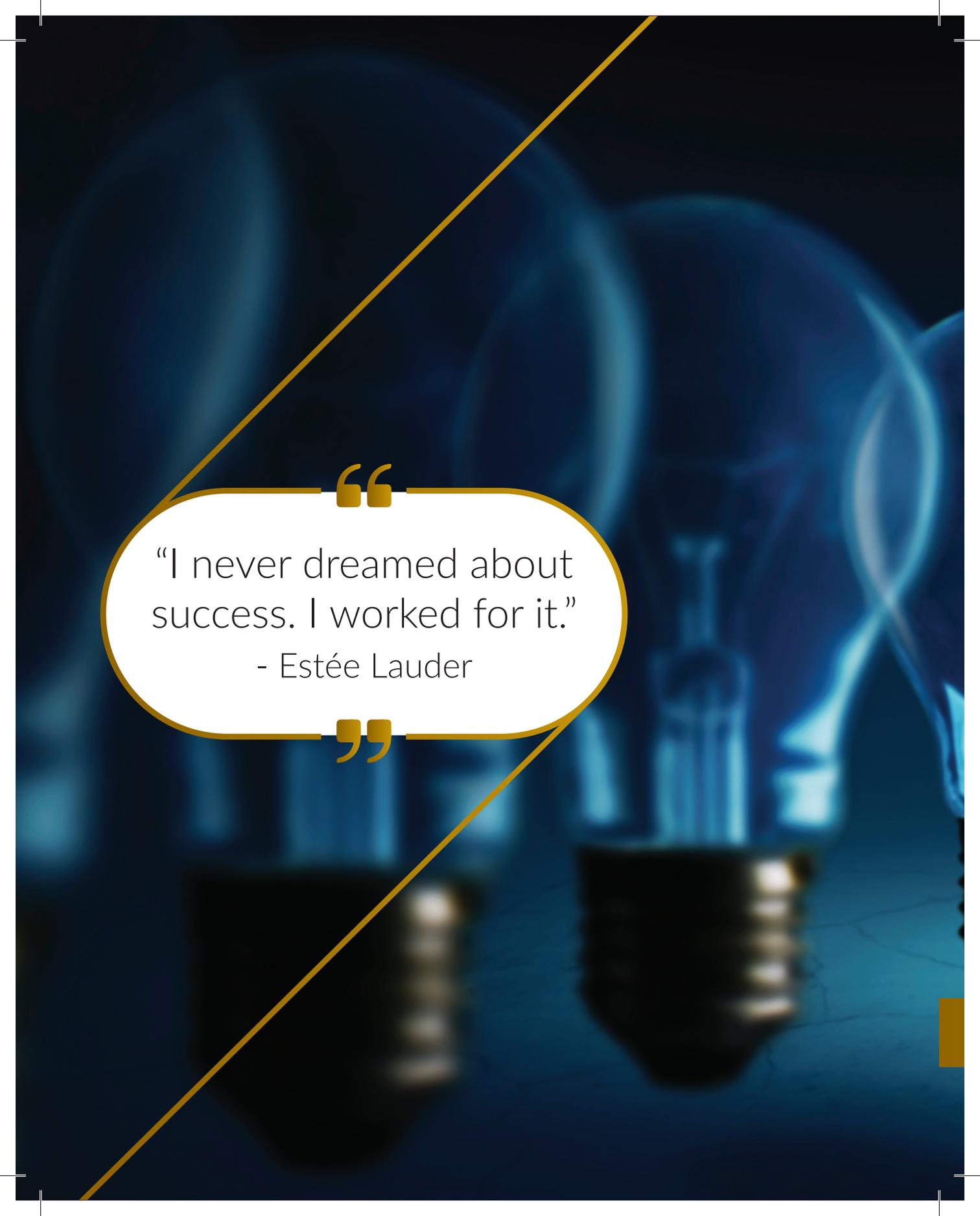
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He always endeavours to use fresh ingredients to create dishes that are exquisite in taste and visual. “My food is completely different. I make my own spices – this is my secret.
”

endeavours to use fresh ingredients to create dishes that are exquisite in taste and visual. “My food is completely different. I make my own spices – this is my secret. I buy all fresh ingredients and make my own recipes and people like my food. When I received my awards, my customers say we are not surprised,” says Shahid.

His favourite dishes from his current menu are Hariyali Chicken Masala (fresh spinach with succulent pieces of boneless chicken in mild spices), Jingra Kal Mirch (king prawns tossed with shallots, ginger, tomato, peppers and garnished with coriander and fresh green chillies – medium hot) and Dum Lamb Achari (a lamb curry bursting with pickle spices, fairly hot) - something for everybody!

When asked which three store-cupboard ingredients he could not cook without, he said 3 staples need to be onions, garam masala and a good mixed curry powder. You can create a curry with just about any type of vegetable or meat using these ingredients.

Shahid has achieved several awards such as the Tiffin Cup 2018, Eat out Eat well West Suffolk Silver Winner, BCA Restaurant of the Year 2017, South Asian Curry Awards 2015 and many more.

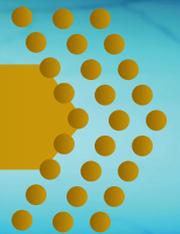


“I never dreamed about
success. I worked for it.”

- Estée Lauder



TOP TIPS





Keith Best

Panel Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ In furthering Unity and Collaboration it is my belief that the major representatives of the industry should come together regularly and discuss the different issues (such as recruitment of chefs, pricing policy, procurement of ingredients, joint marketing etc) and agree to share certain information which is not especially commercially sensitive.

- ▶ There should be agreement on a common line to take and some joint resources should be committed to achieving that aim with clearly set objectives and timeline - there needs to be an agreed strategy. The time for talking and disagreeing is now over and the time for joint action is long overdue.

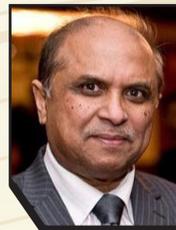


Pasha Khandaker MBE

Panel Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Be optimistic and involve your customer to lobby the government
- ▶ Grow with the flow - Food Management, Technology, Food and Hygiene
- ▶ Modernise the cuisine by making it very appealing and presentable and at the same time keeping it healthy



Shahagir Bakth Faruk

Panel Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Identify and control hazards in order to make safe foods
- ▶ Be proactive and take preventative steps
- ▶ Get used to a management system HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point)



Dr Wali Tasar Uddin MBE

Panel Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Effective marketing and promotion strategy



- ▶ Team work with dedication and determination



- ▶ Train quality chefs who then will lead the kitchen team and generate better creative dishes and presentations



Dr Zaki Rezwana Anwar FRSA

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Listening to customer feedback is crucial for the growth of the business



- ▶ Accept the realities of a changing socio-economic climate and act with an adaptable mindset



- ▶ Improve the service/interface with customers and clients - both virtual and face-to-face



Oli Khan MBE

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ We need to focus more on skills and the curry industry needs to take on more apprentices



- ▶ Proper hygiene is very important when it comes to food preparation



- ▶ Minimise your menu and only sell popular item from your menu



Mujib Islam

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Evolve with current market trends. Try and understand your customers



- ▶ Price your menu based on location and customer base



- ▶ Engage in social media and digital marketing



Cllr Ayesha Chowdhury

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Promote curry industry to the young generation/newcomers by using all possible techniques and use of media
- ▶ Lobby government (under effective leadership) to bring skilled staff/chefs
- ▶ Use of technology is a must and so is staff/management training to improve and learn new skills



Altaf Hussain

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Enthusiasm and passion boost your business
- ▶ Amending training process and staff management systems
- ▶ Keep up to date employment related documents for all employees



Helal Malik

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Understand customer behaviour and deliver beyond expectation
- ▶ Engage customers through social media. It's a tool to impress and inform
- ▶ Dining is a passion. Your menu reflects your creativity and skill. Implement new industry trends



Forhad Hussain Tipu

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Shorter version of menu and Innovation
- ▶ Have your own online ordering facility hub
- ▶ Giving importance to digital marketing



Ruhul Shamsuddin

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Identify your target audience. Look at your local market and tailor your style to appeal to them. All towns have a different community and culture, make sure your restaurant suits their needs

- ▶ Shape your concept. Do not be afraid to market yourself as a Bangladeshi cuisine restaurant. Be confident to promote and show off the Bangladeshi food and culture to educate your customers

- ▶ Create a restaurant theme suitable to your market



Ana Miah

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Train staff on regular intervals
- ▶ Reduce menu content and upgrade regularly
- ▶ Embrace social media and make it part of your marketing strategy



Atikur Rahman

Special Judge
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards



- ▶ Good food hygiene is of paramount importance for the pleasure of your customers and the continued success of your business

- ▶ Have adequate public liability insurance and right paperwork

- ▶ Complete the SFBB (Safer Food, Better Business) folder thoroughly and ensure the opening and closing checks are undertaken on a daily basis



Farhan Masud Khan

Head of Programmes
Channel S



- ▶ Be ready to evolve , especially the chef as customers demand and wants are changing constantly with new diet trends

- ▶ Management training has become a big part of our future for the industry, to learn and implement

- ▶ Communication with employees has to be improved. A training session should take place once a month with all the staffs for better understanding of running of the restaurant



Mohammed Jubair

Chief Reporter
Channel 5

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- ▶ Understand your locality and prioritise the customer's point of view
- ▶ Respect your staff and pay reasonable salaries
- ▶ Be active as an organisation or group to address the curry crisis sharing ideas and experiences



Adnan Hussain

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017

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- ▶ Stay one move ahead i.e. observe what other restaurants are doing, sales patterns in the market and how you can adapt
- ▶ Always have trust in yourself so never doubt what you can accomplish. Forget all the 'buts' just because previous generation did not use similar ideas
- ▶ Always be innovative with your menus. People like an imagination and being in an industry where everybody copies each other, be original and separate yourself from other places



Abdul Kashim

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017

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- ▶ Share your thoughts and ideas with your staff and understand their needs and aspiration
- ▶ You and your staff have a common goal and that is the success of the restaurant, if you benefit so should they
- ▶ A happy team has a direct effect on productivity, which in return means a successful restaurant



Mohi Sami Uddin

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017

“

- ▶ Make sure you invest time in training your team on the technology you have implemented
- ▶ Explore ways to segment data from your systems to help your business-analysis
- ▶ Social media tech will enable you to reach a far bigger crowd, so learn how to use it



Fahad Islam

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- ▶ Stick to your style that works for you and don't compromise your ethics

- ▶ Indian food is healthy as long as you remove the unhealthy elements

- ▶ Always buy quality products and fresh ingredients to get the best nutrients



Tofozzul Miah

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- ▶ Invest in IT - this includes having your own website, mobile app and online ordering system. This will improve efficiency for customers and avoid having to face the breathtaking fees charged by third party online companies

Collect customer data via EPOS systems. Using Twitter and Instagram provides a whole new audience for your business to target

- ▶ Avoid door to door leafleting. Instead, online marketing tools are much more effective



Ash Miah

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- ▶ Investing in staff training and management with a particular focus on HACCAP will provide organisations with greater knowledge in food safety

- ▶ A diverse workforce helps strengthen equal opportunities in the establishment. Simplified menus help embrace a healthy eating lifestyle

- ▶ Using the EPOS systems is fundamental in greater transparencies and management



Safwaan Choudhury

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- ▶ Create engaging marketing campaigns and utilise social media platforms to keep customers up to date

- ▶ Use Tripadvisor and other reviews and give staff the feedback

- ▶ Have a clear and precise menu with accurate descriptions



Murad Ahmed

Finalist
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- ▶ Innovation required to improve the image of catering industry

.....
▶ Employment rights for staff



.....
▶ Pension rights for long term employees



Shathil Islam

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- ▶ Bring new concepts like lunch-time trade, street food, stone cooking (Hot Rock), different Build Your Own (BYO) food experiences

- ▶ Create an attractive atmosphere. Consider human senses - taste, sight, lighting, table layout, painting, colours, cooking process, sound, music, smell, aromatic scents

- ▶ Customise menu according to the survey responses from your diners



Rehan Uddin

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- ▶ Do not accommodate and feed staff. Instead rent out the accommodation and do not include breakfast, lunch and dinner for free. You will save £40k in one year

- ▶ Receive prepped product daily from your supplier. Chicken, lamb, onions, vegetables. Reduce prep time and pay by the hour

- ▶ Vegan customers now make up 7% of the population a new core market. Create new vegan menus



Ziaur Choudhrey

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- ▶ Work with your chef to keep food cost down, use local produce where possible and price accordingly if using expensive ingredients

- ▶ Use social media to reach younger audiences and lifestyle magazines for older generations. Twitter is my go to place

- ▶ Till systems, online booking and ordering, kitchen equipment all lead to efficiency and reduced staff costs



Aziz Miah

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- Reach out for support from the local council, ie, environmental health and premises licence department

- Regularly check and test employee's knowledge and provide training where necessary

- Do not stand still, enhance your own training and knowledge



Monsur Ahmed

Finalist
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- Limited menu items, focusing on quality over quantity to maximise high standard production

- Emphasis on hygiene and working practices to ensure healthy and safe food, to prevent cross contamination

- Continuous training and safe cooking method to ensure high allergy awareness



Samiya Akthar

Finalist
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- Effective marketing reaches consumers instantly

- Amend training process and staff management systems when necessary

- Have solid foundation of trust and integrity



Aki Rahman

Winner
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017



- Plan and design your menu very carefully and keep your menu size in check. Categorise menu items according to profit and popularity levels. Maximise income from high margin products

- Turn to healthier versions of Asian food. In your menu, showcase your culinary philosophy and brand attributes featuring traditional healthy dishes and ingredients

- Know your customers. Be attentive. Make your service exceptional



Tania Rahman

Winner
The Restaurant Talent Show
Awards 2017

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- ▶ Focus on talent and invest in your team by training passionate chefs to your standard of cuisine ultimately benefiting the business in the long term
- ▶ Make technology your friend by investing in state of the art EPOS system
- ▶ Keep it simple by focusing on quality of produce and ingredients rather than quantity of items on your menu



Sadia R Hussain JP BEM

Host
Catering Circle, Essex

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- ▶ Offer incentives to employees, flexible hours and more diverse workforce
- ▶ Reduce menu sizes and create better working environment
- ▶ Transparency in terms of accounting and tax matters



Foysoil Choudhury MBE MSP

Host
Catering Circle, Edinburgh

“

- ▶ Develop a professional and positive marketing strategy
- ▶ Form a national committee to lobby regional and national governments
- ▶ Introduce modern Information Technology in areas of service, sales, procurement and training



Raza Miah

Senior Food Safety and
Licensing Officer

“

- ▶ Better food safety standard, better business compliance
- ▶ Clean your hands regularly, prevent cross contamination risk
- ▶ Regularly monitor food safety, preventing food poisoning incidents



Cllr Parvez Ahmed

Former Mayor
London Borough of Brent

“

- ▶ Grow together as one team

- ▶ Build, improve and develop relationship through coaching, constructive feedback and opportunities

- ▶ Create the environment of trust, acceptance, respect, understanding and courtesy to build and maintain strong relationships



Oliver Ranson

Pricing Expert

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- ▶ When it comes to pricing forget about costs - it is what your customers are willing to pay that counts

- ▶ Experiment with new promotions, price increases and special offers to test how your market responds to price changes

- ▶ Offer special prices only when the restaurant is not busy



Jan Knights

Managing Director
Square Mile Insurance

“

- ▶ Management training has become a big part of our future for the industry, to learn and implement

- ▶ Communication with employees has to be improved. A training session should take place once a month with all the staffs for better understanding of running of the restaurant

- ▶ Address our problem and other issues with one voice. Although we may have many organisations our goal should be one



Ashraf Ahmed

Community Activist

“

- ▶ Train educate and inform young people of traditions and new catering methods and practices

- ▶ Make industry more attractive for them and their needs

- ▶ Encourage them to flourish and create next generation of restaurants based on past and present



AH Afzal Mahmood

Finalist
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017

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- ▶ Keep consistent in your quality of service with every customer
- ▶ Food quality must be at its peak all time, not on just some dishes but aLL
- ▶ Cleanliness and hygiene must be a top priority at all time



Aminur Rahman

Director of IT
Purple-i Technologies

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- ▶ Avoid being listed in third party online ordering and online booking companies' website
- ▶ Invest in reputable companies: Digital goods such as an EPOS and order online services are long time investments- go to companies with a long standing reputation within the sector who will give you good customer service and training
- ▶ The Electronic Point-of-Sale (EPOS) is not an option in the 21st century - it's an absolute must for curry houses. It saves time and money, reduces paperwork and creates a customer database giving you better cash control



Zakaria Chowdhury

Finalist
The Restaurant Talent
Show Awards 2017

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- ▶ Better food safety standard, better business compliance
- ▶ Must provide at least Level 2 Food Safety in Catering training to your staffs
- ▶ Get a 'CATERING GUIDE', which has legal requirements, 'Guide to Compliance' and 'Advice on Good Practice'



Shafi Ahmed

eCommerce Expert
dineNET.co.uk

“

- ▶ Take control of your own business. Use your own online ordering system on your website.
- ▶ Ensure your order online site is responsive and also has a mobile App site or native mobile App
- ▶ Ensure your online ordering system site is integrated with your EPOS



Ahad Ahmed

Senior Producer
Channel 5

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- ▶ Understand customers, products, and business
- ▶ Identify the actions needed to reduce waste, engage staff, and use local resources
- ▶ Redesign and refurbish your restaurant for greater efficiency



Suhana Ahad

Director
Pearl Advertising

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- ▶ Never start without the big three. Great chef, great location and a great concept
- ▶ Be ready to evolve , especially the chef as customers demand and wants are changing constantly with new diet trends
- ▶ Keep you brand alive on social media. It is a must and the best way to attract new customers and retain them through online promotions











www.cateringcircle.co.uk